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Blessed Joan the Maid

By

Arthur Stapylton Barnes, M.A.

University College, Oxford

Trinity College, Cambridge

Chamberlain of Honour to H.H. Pius X

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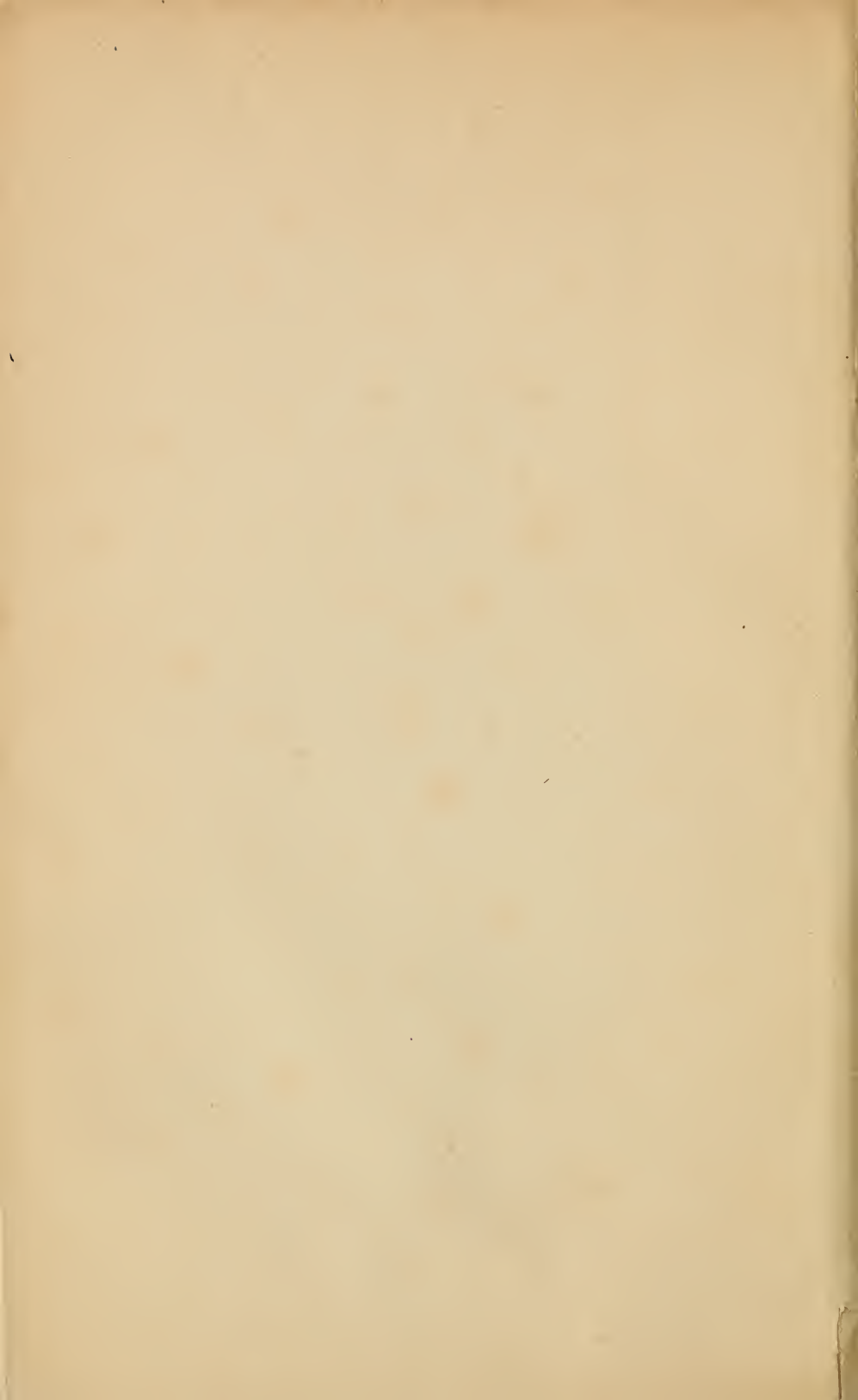
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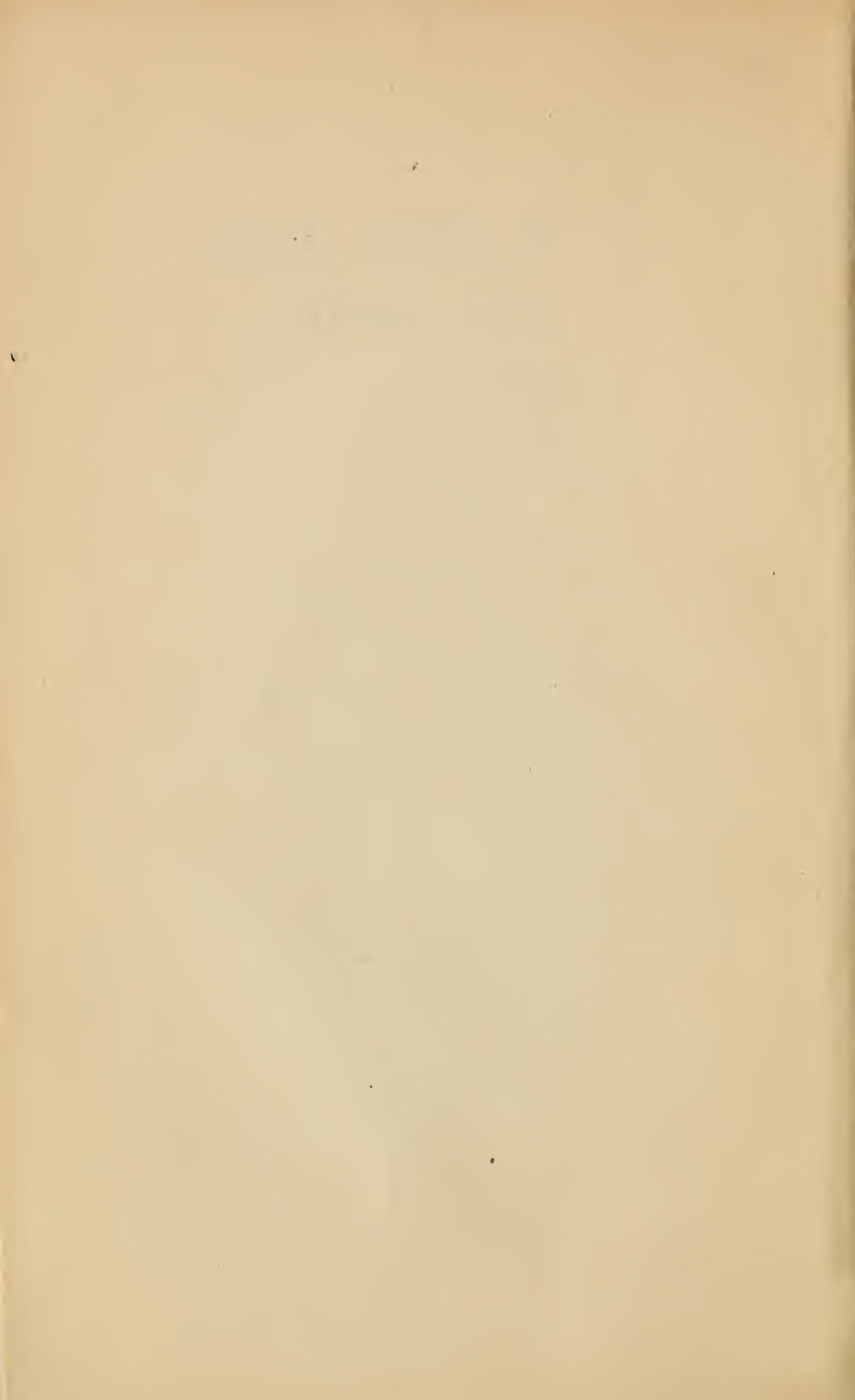


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Imprimatur :

EDM. CANONICUS SURMONT,

Vicarius Generalis.

Westmonasterii, die 18 Augusti, 1909.

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Blessed Joan the Maid.

CHAPTER I.

The Childhood of the Maid.

ON the evening of the 6th of January, the Feast of the Epiphany, in the year 1412, the people of a little village of Eastern France, by name Domremy, were, if we are to believe a contemporary writer, seized with a sudden and inexplicable joy, filling them with wonder, though they knew not what was its cause. They went about asking one another why it was that they felt so strangely happy; what had happened to themselves and to France? Years afterwards, when Joan had become famous, they realised that it was on that day that she, the future Deliverer of France, had been born into the world. Even for the sceptic, who will remind us that Twelfth Night has always been in every country a season of popular festivity and merriment, the story may have at least the value of helping him to remember the birthday of the Maid, whose

strangely romantic story we are now about to tell.

Domremy was a little village on the very edge of French territory as it then was. The upper waters of the Meuse flowed past the hamlet, and on the other side of the river the villages were Burgundian, allied with England against France. The child grew up in the very atmosphere of war, always apprehensive of possible attacks from the neighbouring villages, and not without actual experience of the suffering that war must always bring with it. She could not forget, for instance, how, while she was still a child, the little church of Domremy was burned to the ground by a party of Burgundians ; and how she had, while it was rebuilding, to go for worship to the village of Greux, the mother-church of her own parish, and itself not much more than half-a-mile from her father's house.

But in the main her childish years, in spite of the close proximity of the hostile frontier, passed away quietly enough. She was brought up piously and seriously by her father and mother, and from a very early age was greatly attracted towards everything connected with religion. "There was no better child in either of the villages" was the sworn testimony of the neighbours, taken at her trial a few years later ; "she

was good, simple, and gentle," always ready to take her share in the various family labours, sometimes going with her father to his work in the fields, but more often sitting with her mother and spending the day in sewing and knitting. She prided herself especially on her skill in these feminine accomplishments, and told her judges at Rouen that "she was ready in sewing and spinning to match herself against any woman in the town." She did not, however, tend the flocks or act as a shepherdess. The art of a later time has often delighted to represent her so employed, but she herself, on at least three occasions, denied that she could remember having done so. Her life was spent mainly in the home, and she learnt all household duties from a mother competent to teach them.

The little cottage in which her first years were passed still stands preserved by the piety of later generations ; and from the window of the little attic where she slept, one may still look upon the sanctuary of the church where "Messire," as she loved to call our Divine Lord, dwelt ever in the Blessed Sacrament. There, after all, was the treasure of her heart, and thither many times a day was she wont to betake herself. In the early morning she would go to hear Mass, which she never missed ; in

the evening to the daily Vespers ; and again and again besides, as the day wore through, she would go across to the church to visit our Lord in His sacramental presence. There, before the altar, or in front of Our Lady's statue, the people of Domremy, as they told in later years, would find her praying, her eyes fixed on the crucifix or the sacred image, her hands lifted up to heaven, and every feature of her face filled with joy that seemed all divine. Always above all things she loved the sound of church bells, and wherever she was, even in the far-off fields, when she heard the sound of the bells ringing for service she would kneel down and pray. More than any of the other girls of her age she was grave and thoughtful, and devoted to religious things ; though she was without much learning, unable either to read or to write, and knowing few prayers by heart, except the " Our Father," the " Hail Mary," and the Creed.

But it was not always work or prayer in Joan's childhood. She would go with the other boys and girls when she was quite young and dance under the " Fairy Tree " which grew near the village, and would join in all the games which the children loved to play, and the songs with which, like other children in all times, they were

wont to pass their leisure hours away. She loved the birds and all God's creatures, and they never feared her, but would come and feed out of her hand in the woods at Domremy, to the wonder and admiration of some of her little friends. Altogether, hers was a happy and beautiful childhood, a good Christian home, and a life of innocent mirth as well as of happy toil.

The "Fairy Tree" was to play a great part in the interrogations of Joan's trial at Domremy. Her judges would have been only too glad if they could have found anything evil of which they could accuse her, especially in connection with black magic and superstition of any kind. Her answer to them, when they inquired about it, is worth transcribing in full, as showing how entirely innocent the whole matter really was. The tree was an ancient beech of simple beauty, with great branches hanging down on every side to touch the ground, and there was a custom among the children of Domremy on Mid-Lent Sunday and on the summer feast days to go out there to play and dance, and to hang wreaths on the boughs of the tree, which stood quite near to Joan's own cottage. But we will hear what she herself has to tell us about it.

"There is a tree close by Domremy, which is called the 'Ladies' Tree,' or sometimes the

‘Fairies’ Tree.’ Near by there is a spring, and I have heard that sometimes people who have fever drink of the water in order to be cured. I have seen some drink it myself, but I do not know whether they were cured or not. . . . I used to go there sometimes with other girls and make wreaths for the image of the Blessed Virgin at Domremy. Sometimes I have heard some old people, who were no relations of mine, say that the spot was haunted by fairies, and one woman in particular, who was one of my godmothers, and wife of the Mayor of Domremy, used even to say that she had seen the fairies. I do not know whether she spoke the truth or not, but I have never seen them myself. I have seen young girls hanging their garlands on the branches, and I have hung them there myself, but from the time that I knew that I was to come to France, I took but little part in these games and expeditions, nor do I remember that I ever danced round the tree after I reached years of discretion. Still, I may have done so sometimes with the children, but I sang more often than I danced.”

There was an oak wood, too, not far from Domremy, and this, too, comes into the questions asked her at her trial. They tried to make out that here again there was superstition, and

spoke of old prophecies, attributed to other times, which had said that from that wood should come forth a maiden who would work miracles. She admitted that she had heard of the prophecy, but denied that she had put any faith in it. In her lifetime, indeed, the singular agreement of the tradition with the fact of her life was already evident, and the closing words of the prophecy, of the existence of which before Joan's time we have thus unexceptionable evidence, have been fulfilled entirely with the circumstance of her death. We have the exact words of the prediction in question, which ran as follows :

“From the Oak Wood shall come forth a maiden who shall bring the remedy for the wounds [of France]. So soon as she shall have taken the fortresses, she shall dry up with her breath the source of the evil.

“Rivers of tears shall flow from her eyes. She shall fill the island [of Britain] with a horrible cry.

“She shall be slain by the stag with ten branches [the young King Henry VI, who was ten years old at the time of her death].”

In her thirteenth year, one fine summer day in the year 1424, about the hour of noon, while she was walking in her father's garden, Joan suddenly perceived a great light near the

church, and heard speaking from it a Voice. She was fasting, she tells us—it was apparently the vigil of the Ascension—but had not fasted the day before, so the suspicion some expressed that it was due to this cause was not justified. The immediate effect was to fill her with a great fear, for she knew not what it might portend. Still she was never really in doubt whence it came to her. “The voice was kind,” she told her judges, “the voice came from God. When I had heard it thrice, I knew well that it was indeed the voice of an angel.” “What did it tell you?” they asked her in return. “It told me to be a good girl, to be pious and to conduct myself well.”

3 times,

It was not for some little time after this that the Voice spoke to her of her mission to deliver France. In the first weeks, at any rate, the counsel seems to have been only moral, exhorting her to be good and to attend to her religious duties. She spoke of her strange experience to nobody, not even to her confessor, for three whole years. Still she was always most attentive to its guidance, which was given constantly, two or three times in every week, and, like another Maiden, she “kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.” From the first she felt that so extraordinary a privilege

separated her in some way from others, and so, she tells us, the very first time she heard the Voice she made a vow to keep her maidenhood so long as God might please, and until He should disclose to her that His Will was otherwise.

Very soon after the first hearing of the Voice, there was, however, a development of the message. She was, so she was now told, "to go into France." The angel told "*de la grande pitié du pays de France*," of the sad plight to which her country was reduced. Slowly and by degrees, as her mind grew to maturity, she came to understand what it was that God intended her to do. By degrees also the Voices became more defined, and not merely did she see the light, but she learnt to distinguish the actual forms of her Visitants. "I have seen them with the eyes of my body," she tells her judges, "just as well as I see you. And when they went away and left me I used to weep, and I longed that they might take me with them." She came to know them one from another by their words and appearance. St. Michael was the first that came to her, a young man grave and serious, and he promised to bring others with him on a future occasion, St. Catherine and St. Margaret. The dress and

exact appearance of St. Michael she never would describe, not even whether she saw him bearing arms, for "she had not permission." Of the other Saints, however, she tells us that "their heads were crowned with fair crowns, rich and precious." *That* "she had leave from the Lord to tell us," but she tells us little more. Always, "as was fitting," she saw them surrounded by a blaze of light and glory.

After a little time it was enough for her to hear the Voice even without seeing the vision, to know which one it was of her heavenly Visitants who had come to her. She would bow herself down in reverence before them, and sometimes was allowed to embrace their knees and their feet. Then, after the vision was withdrawn, she would kneel down and kiss the ground where the holy feet had stood, longing that they would take her away, and let her be always in their company. But this, as yet, was not allowed to be. Like St. Catherine and St. Margaret, she too must share in the pain of martyrdom before she could come to reach the glory of their reward.

This matter of Joan's guiding "Voices" is always a standing difficulty to her Protestant and free-thinking biographers.

It is impossible to write a life of the Maid

without making some attempt to account for the phenomenon, and the recorded details obstinately refuse to fit into any naturalistic explanation. Conscious deceit is, of course, out of the question; self-hypnotisation is scarcely less so. There is no trace of any outside influence exerted upon her, nor are her ideas of the Saints who visited her drawn from the popular beliefs and stories of the peasants among whom her youth was spent. "Only a Catholic priest," says an acute French writer, "can tell the story of the Maid of Orleans without grave embarrassment." For the Catholic can accept Joan's statements without reserve, and will find no difficulty in supposing that to one, so astonishingly gifted, was to be given so strange and difficult a task, and whose life work for God was to be the veil which divides us all from the unseen world, and which may have been less opaque and dense than it is to more ordinary mortals. For us the Communion of Saints is a reality and a central dogma of the faith, and it presents no sort of difficulty that privileged souls should be able to realise that Communion more vividly than is the case with our own blunted and dark perceptions. The recent decision of the Church that Joan is to be counted among the Blessed removes all possible

difficulty from any Catholic mind, and takes away all doubt that her "Voices" were, indeed, as she herself so constantly maintained, truly "sent of God."

CHAPTER II.

The Call to Work.

THE years passed away, and the time pre-ordained by God for her life's work to begin at length arrived. France was, indeed, at the very nadir of her fortunes. All the history of the last fifty years had been but a series of humiliations and defeats. We must not think of the situation as we know it to-day, when for hundreds of years France has been a great and a united nation. In 1428 she was only slowly developing from a mere coalition of provinces under great feudal chiefs, who owed little more than a nominal obedience to the King of France, of whom they were virtually independent. France was being slowly forged into a single nation by the necessity of united resistance to the conquering power of England.

For nearly a hundred years the Kings of England, themselves French rather than English in origin, had been trying to make themselves Kings also of France. The late King, Henry V, had almost succeeded in this endeavour. He had married the Princess Katherine of France,

and, wearied with the strife, a large portion of the country had acknowledged the claim of their infant son, Henry VI of England, at that time only a child of nine or ten years of age, to be King of France, to the exclusion of the Dauphin, the eldest son of the late King and the undoubted heir by right. The Dauphin had not as yet been crowned King, and, therefore, according to the custom of the time, was not commonly given the title. No King of France in those days was held to be King in the full sense until he had been duly crowned by the Church at Rheims, and anointed with the holy oil which was there preserved, and which, as it was believed, had been brought from heaven by an angel and given to Saint Rémi, the first Bishop. Rheims, however, was in the hands of the English, so the Dauphin could not be crowned there, nor would his people have acknowledged the validity of any coronation at any other place.

Between the Kings of France and the Dukes of Burgundy, who were the greatest princes, next to the crown, in the whole of France, there was a blood-feud. Each side could look back to the treacherous murder by the other of one of their own line. Burgundy, therefore, was allied with England against France.

The Dauphin, the rightful King of France, was named Charles, and was afterwards known as Charles VII. He was a weak man, not without good qualities, but the slave of his favourites, and incapable of taking a strong line about anything. In 1428 he held no more of France than the part south of the river Loire. Paris and all the North was in the hands of the enemy. The strongest place left to him was Orleans, and that was besieged and already hard pressed. If Orleans fell, it would be practically impossible for the Dauphin to keep a footing in France at all, and the whole country would be at the mercy of the English and Burgundian allies. The state of affairs seemed almost hopeless.

Such was the political position in the year 1428. Let us turn next to the figure which within three years was to bring about so startling and dramatic a change in the entire situation.

Joan was now sixteen years of age, tall and well grown, somewhat boy-like in general appearance; with grey eyes and a rather pale complexion. Her hair was black and long, though in later years she wore it cut across the shoulders. No authentic portrait of her exists, for she never sat to any painter, but there is no

physical
traits

lack of witnesses to tell us of the singular beauty of her face and figure, and of the great dignity, unexpected in a peasant maiden, of her general bearing. "She seemed to me," wrote Guy de Laval, two years later, "like something wholly divine." There were none who did not admire her beauty, but at the same time there were very few, even at the moments of her greatest distress, who dared to take advantage of her weakness, or to treat her with levity or any want of respect.

It was in May, 1428, that the "Voices" became more urgent and bade her to go, as a first step towards the commencement of her mission, to Vaucouleurs, the nearest garrison town to Domremy, and to place herself at the disposition of Robert de Baudricourt, offering her services for the King of France. She dared not go alone, and there was no one as yet who knew of her strange experiences. So she went to her uncle, a countryman named Durand Lassois, and told him all about it. Lassois at first demurred, and who can blame him? But when Joan spoke to him with all the force of her earnest purpose, and told him how her life had become impossible to her unless she obeyed her "Voices," for "she could no longer bide where she was," even though "she would

rather have been torn asunder by four horses than have done this thing, if it were not the will of God," then by degrees his thought changed. He remembered Joan's reputation for piety and common sense, and remembered also the prophecies, familiar all through that countryside, which told how France was to be saved by a maiden who should come from that very place. And at last he consented to take her as she asked.

The scene the next day in the Castle of Vaucouleurs assuredly does not lack its ridiculous aspect. There was de Baudricourt, a rough soldier even for those rough times, and none too godly, surrounded by his trusted officers, holding a council of war to decide the next step to be taken in the dangerous straits in which they just then found themselves, owing to the victorious advance of the English. And here, before him, stands a village maiden, accompanied by a local farmer, speaking of a message come to her from God, which she wanted sent to the Dauphin. "Let him guard himself well, and not offer battle to his foes, for the Lord will give him succour by the middle of next Lent." No wonder that Baudricourt scoffed at her, taking her for an adventuress and her companion for a fool, and that he was,

we are told, only restrained by her dignity and obvious goodness from offering her the gravest insult. As it was he contented himself with mocking. "Take her home," he said to her uncle, "give her a good whipping, and send her back to her father." So ended her first attempt to fulfil her mission, somewhat ignominiously. Still, she had done her best, and, at the least, had not been "disobedient to the heavenly vision." She went back to Domremy and took up the old life again, until the first opportunity should present itself. But all could not be now quite as it had been in the past. Her father had heard of her visit to Baudricourt, and it reminded him of a dream which had made a great impression upon him two years previously. He had seen in his dream his daughter going with men-at-arms. Now, it appeared, she was bent on doing that very thing. "It were better," he told his sons, "that you should drown your sister than let her do such a thing as that; and, indeed, if you did not, I would do it myself with my own hands."

In the circumstances clearly the best thing to be done, so he thought, was to get the girl safely married. A qualified suitor was not hard to find. But Joan absolutely refused to think of marriage. The young man summoned her

before the judge, saying that she had promised herself to him. He thought, most likely, that she would never dare to defend her cause. She went, however, under the guidance of her "Voices," and won her case triumphantly.

The months passed on, and the new year, 1429, was already come, bringing with it Joan's seventeenth birthday. The middle of Lent, the time at which she had foretold to Baudricourt that the promised deliverance would come to the Dauphin, was now due within three short months. Orleans was already invested and seemed likely to fall, and the Dauphin's cause looked utterly hopeless. It was evident to all that unless succour came—and there was no source, humanly speaking, from whence it could come—the disaster must be complete and irremediable. It was the blackest moment of *la grande pitié de France*.

Now the "Voices" became once more insistent. Once, twice, three times, and more a week they came to her, urging and commanding her to take up her mission. It was in vain that she urged in reply, "I am a poor girl, I do not know how to ride or fight," or that she pleaded her father's absolute prohibition. The "Voices" still insisted: "It is the will of God. It is God who commands it." She felt unable to resist

their pressure. When later on she was asked the question, "Did you not think it was a sin to disobey your parents and leave your father's house?" she answered: "It had to be. I have written to them since, and they have forgiven me. Had I had a hundred fathers and a hundred mothers, had I been a king's daughter, I should have gone." It was once more to the good Durand that she betook herself. His wife was about to be confined, and Joan suggested to him to ask that she should come to help her through her trouble. In the early days of January, 1428, Joan left Domremy never to return.

From his own house at Burey, Durand Lassois conducted Joan once more to Vaucouleurs. There he found her a lodging with a worthy couple called Royer, and left her to work out her own mission. The task, even to her enthusiasm, must have seemed utterly impossible. De Baudricourt, though she met him often in the streets of the little town, and was able more than once to get the opportunity of speaking to him, was as obdurate as ever, and only laughed at her. Still, a few adherents came to believe in her, even in those early days, and one of these was a young man-at-arms of gentle birth, Jean de Novelonpont. His own evidence, given

at the Trial of Rehabilitation, brings the scene vividly before us. He met the Maid, he told the judges, one day early in February, in the streets of Vaucouleurs, dressed in a miserable old red gown, and asked her what she was doing there. She answered, "I am come to the King's own town to ask Robert de Baudricourt to lead me to the Dauphin. But Baudricourt pays no heed to me or to my words. Still, I must somehow get to the Dauphin before mid-Lent, even if I wear my legs to the knees. No one in the world, neither kings, nor dukes, nor the daughter of the King of Scotland,* nor any other can save France ; there is no help save from me. Far liefer had I stayed spinning beside my mother ; this is not my profession ; but I must go and I shall go, because it is my Lord's wish." "And who is your Lord?" he asked her. "My Lord is God." Then the young man, thrilled by her earnestness and fired by her enthusiasm, made his solemn promise to her. "Then I, John, swear to you, the Maid, my hands in your hands, that I will, by God's help, lead you to the King. When will you go?" "Better to-day than

* Margaret of Scotland, then aged five, who was about to be betrothed to Louis, afterwards Louis XI, who was the son of the Dauphin, and at this time six years of age.

to-morrow—better to-morrow than later on.”

Still the support of de Baudricourt had to be obtained, and was slow in coming. It was the prediction, or rather the announcement, of the great defeat of Rouvray, made to him by the Maid long before the news had reached the town, that changed his point of view. “In the name of God,” she said to him on that day, “you are tarrying long in sending me. This very day the gentle Dauphin has suffered grievous loss close by Orleans. And he will be in peril yet more great unless you send me to him.”

This proof of supernatural power and knowledge, coupled with the growing pressure of the military situation, determined Baudricourt to yield to her request. But first—for it is to this point that it appears that we should assign the incident—he determined to send a priest and test her to see whether or not her knowledge was from the Evil One. The priest came and uttered his exorcism, but Joan convinced them both that her knowledge was from God.

A few days later, on February 23rd, accompanied by Jean de Novelonpont and Bertrand de Poulengy, and their two servants, Joan made her start for Chinon. Since it was clearly impossible for her, in the disturbed and

dangerous condition of affairs, to ride through France in a woman's clothes, she was dressed, in place of the old red gown, in a page's costume of a black jerkin and hat, a tunic of grey reaching to the knee, long hose and a pair of high gaiters. A horse was bought for her costing sixteen francs of gold, and de Baudricourt himself presented her with a sword. He was not, even now, without misgivings, and warned her that all the ways were full of men-at-arms. But she had already received the counsel of her "Voices," and spoke out bravely in reply: "I fear them not, the way is made clear before me. I have my Lord who makes smooth the path that leads to the gentle Dauphin, for to do this thing was I born." "God go with you," replied de Baudricourt, as he took his leave of her, "betide what may."

So, through "the Gate of France," which still stands at Vaucouleurs, the little cavalcade passed on its way to Chinon, where at that time were the Dauphin and his Court.

The mission of Joan the Maid had thus begun.

CHAPTER III.

The King's Secret.

THE journey from Vaucouleurs to Chinon was one of eleven days. The first night was spent at the Abbey of Saint Urbain, to the great joy of the Maid, for there she was able to hear Mass before starting in the morning. "We should do well," she told her escort, "so to arrange as to hear Mass every day"; but in practice this proved impossible, and only on one other morning did she have this privilege on her way to Chinon. This was mainly due to the fears of Jean de Novelonpont, who was afraid of English ambuscades if they travelled by day. These fears were not shared by Joan herself, who felt that she was under a special and divine protection. "Fear nothing," she said to them, "for I am commanded to do this thing; my brothers in Paradise tell me everything I have to do. For the last few years they have been telling me, they and my Lord, that I must go to the wars to win back the kingdom of France."

To the eyes of her companions, used to the

rough life of campaigners, Joan appeared already almost as a Saint herself. It was no Amazon they were following to the war, but a Virgin come from Paradise to lead them. She was full of thought for maidenly innocence, and at night slept fully dressed among her escort, not one of whom, as they afterwards told her judges, ventured for one moment to harbour an evil thought against her. It would have seemed to them nothing less than sacrilege to do so, so evident to their eyes was the holiness of her character. "Virtuous and gentle, a good Catholic, and fearing God, she seemed to me," said Bertrand de Poulengy, "as if she were already as good as a Saint."

Arrived at St. Catherine de Fierbois, a sanctuary of one of her two patron Saints, they halted for a day, and Joan seized the opportunity to hear three Masses in thanksgiving. She wrote a letter, too, and sent it on to the Dauphin, asking him to grant her an audience, since "she had travelled a hundred and fifty leagues to bring him aid, and even now had good news to tell him." She thought afterwards, but was not sure, that in this same letter she had told him that, as a sign that she was truly sent, she would pick him out among all the members of his Court.

The Maid's arrival was, indeed, at an opportune moment. The Dauphin was reduced almost to despair. The royal treasury was empty, there was not any money to pay the soldiers. Orleans could not hold out more than a few short days, and once that city had fallen there was no place of safety for him. Still, even so, it was some little time before she could get her audience. Doubtless the courtiers by whom Charles was surrounded looked upon her coming as a piece of foolishness and would not tell their master. Meanwhile she would say nothing to anyone in a lesser position, but insisted again and again that her mission was to the Dauphin alone, and that to him she would tell everything, but to no one else. "I have two things to do," she kept on saying, "to deliver Orleans and to lead Charles to Rheims that he may be consecrated King."

After two days she was at last admitted to the royal presence. The hall was filled with lights and crowded with courtiers, and Charles had hidden himself in plain attire among others of his own age. Yet Joan, who never can have looked on such a scene before, was not dazzled or confused, but came forward straight towards him with much humility and simple bearing, and picking him out without difficulty from

those who were with him, said to him, "Most noble Lord Dauphin, I come from God to help you and your realm." The Dauphin drew her apart and conversed with her for a long time. What passed between them no one knew, but all could see how much Charles was cheered and strengthened by what she had said to him. Whatever it was, the Dauphin was henceforward on her side.

This question of "the King's secret" was one which played a great part in Joan's trial. She was questioned on it again and again, but could never be got to reveal it. Her "Voices," she said, had told her before she left Vaucouleurs that she should be given a sign by which the Dauphin should be converted. This she communicated to him, and from that time he believed in her.

There is, however, although the absolute truth can never be known with certainty, a very general consensus of tradition as to the real nature of this secret. Charles, weighed down with constant reverses, had come to doubt whether the cause of all might not be that he himself was illegitimate, not his father's true son, and that for this reason God was refusing to bless his undertakings. He had prayed, therefore, secretly in his oratory, using no

words but only in his heart, that God would give him some sign whether he was right to persevere, or whether he ought to give up the struggle and to fly to Spain or Scotland or some other place of refuge. It was the nature of this secret prayer that Joan now revealed to him; a fact that none could know, save only himself and God. She had learned it from her "Voices." This explanation, which seems to be the right one, tells us also why it was that Joan could not reveal the secret to her judges when a captive in the hands of the English. What might not have been made of an admission that the King of France had doubts about his own legitimacy? Nothing could make her tell *that*, not even the threat of torture and the actual sight of the instruments prepared for that purpose.

Joan had converted the Dauphin, but her sign was for him alone: it made no impression on his Court. Nor would Charles, always timid and slow to act, take any action upon his own responsibility. The Church must be consulted and must bless this strange messenger who knew so much, and who claimed to be from God. So the precious days slipped away in endless questionings, and the heart of the Maid became more and more despairing. "Noble

Dauphin," she said to Charles, "why do you not believe me? We have but one year and little more that I have to live.* I tell you that God has pity on your kingdom and your people." But still delays were interposed. The Dauphin was personally kind to her, and asked her to dine at his table with his brother d'Alençon and de Trémoille; a strange company for the peasant maid to meet, but one in which she behaved with that invariable courtesy and dignity which she seemed to have learnt from her celestial visitors. In no society, among no surroundings, was Joan ever discomposed or otherwise than at her ease. It is not the least remarkable circumstance in her astonishing career that this should have been so, being as she was a mere village girl who had lived all her life in such simple surroundings.

The priests and doctors whom Charles had consulted at Chinon could not agree, and it was resolved to waste yet more precious time by sending the case on to Poitiers. At that place there were in consequence assembled a great body of learned men to try her cause. The

* This prophecy is absolutely authentic. It is d'Alençon, Charles' own brother, who records it for us. The Maid was never in doubt, from the very first, what was in store for her, but she never allowed it to affect her actions.

Archbishop of Rheims was there and the Bishop of Poitiers ; Gerard Machet, the King's Confessor ; and many learned professors of the University of Paris, who had remained faithful to Charles, and were therefore banished from their University. These men sat for three weeks and debated on the question of Joan's mission ; whether she were really to be considered as sent from God, or not. Unfortunately the records have all been lost, and we have only hearsay evidence of the way in which she acquitted herself, making all men wonder by the simple faith and shrewdness which made her invulnerable to every attack. One man asked her for a sign. "I will not tempt God," she replied, "by asking for a sign. The sign which He has appointed is that I should raise the siege of Orleans and lead the Dauphin to be crowned at Rheims." Another asked her why she always called Charles the Dauphin and would not give him the title of King. "I will call him King," she replied, "when I have led him to Rheims and seen him consecrated." "What is the use of men-at-arms," asked another, "if you know already that God has promised victory?" "The men-at-arms must be there to fight," she answered, "in order that God may give them victory."

Many years afterwards Maître Séguin, one of her examiners, and one, too, who had come off with least credit against her in his verbal passages at arms, made solemn deposition that on this occasion he had heard Joan make four prophecies and that all of them had since been fulfilled. She told her judges that the English would be beaten, and the siege of Orleans raised ; that the Dauphin would be crowned at Rheims ; that Paris would come back to the royal side ; and that the Duke of Orleans would return from his long captivity in England. No predictions at that moment could have seemed more wild, but only a few years passed before every one had been fulfilled.

The impression which the Maid produced at Poitiers alike on her judges and on the people of the place was wholly favourable. The judges reported, without altogether committing themselves to a belief in the miraculous character of her mission, that it was right that the King should allow her to go to Orleans with the army, so that, if she were from God, she might be able to show there the signs which she had promised and to bring fresh succour to the arms of France. So far but no further would they go. Still, it was sufficient. Joan had won her point. Precious weeks had slipped away in

these useless questionings, but now she was free to go forward. The obstacles in her way had been removed.

One question in particular, afterwards to be so keenly debated and brought as an accusation against her, gave her judges at Poitiers little trouble. It was the question whether or not, since she was to ride to battle with men-at-arms, she would do so in male attire. She had put on a man's dress under stress of necessity, for it would have been impossible for her to ride across a hostile country in any other way. Now that these dangers were no longer existent, and she was safe from attack with the army of her King, ought she to continue so dressed? The Archbishop of Rheims had no doubt on the matter. "It is more becoming," said he, "since these things have to be done in the company of men, that they should be done in male attire." So also thought the rest of the judges. Joan herself had never been in doubt upon the subject, for her "Voices" had long since given her directions on the point. She felt that in this way she was far safer from insult and injury. "When I find myself among the troops," she said, "if I am dressed as a man, they will forget that I am a woman; and in this way it seems to me that I shall

best preserve virginity of thought and act."

This point explains for us the pertinacity, almost the obstinacy, with which Joan clung to her masculine dress. "She knew," as M. Petit de Julleville has written of her in his interesting study of her life and character, "that war is not a woman's business, and, therefore, out of respect for her sex, she wished to lay aside woman's garments when she felt obliged to fight in obedience to the Will of God. This girl of seventeen, alone and defenceless among rough soldiers, ended by attaching a certain mystic virtue to the manly garb which was her protection. So long as she wore it she felt that with her sex thus disguised, her modesty would be in no danger." It was at once the symbol of her mission; the proof that she had not abandoned the work that God had sent her to do; and the surest defence against any sort of offence against that virginal innocence which all through her life was so marked a characteristic of her soul, and which, in spite of her manly dress, has won for her the title which she shares with one other yet greater than herself—the proudest title that a woman's virtue can possibly win—*la Pucelle*, the Maid of France.

CHAPTER IV.

Getting ready for Battle.

THE verdict of the doctors at Poitiers took away all the Dauphin's hesitation. After all, perhaps, he had acted wisely, in spite of the loss of so much valuable time, for the extraordinary course he was now about to take, in putting an untried maiden at the head of his forces, needed all the support he could obtain. An effective answer was absolutely necessary to silence any doubters who might still question whether Joan's remarkable powers and knowledge were not due to sorcery and to unlawful commerce with the powers of Evil. But now that he had such an answer ready, he lost no time in making use of the unexpected auxiliary who had thus presented herself. He quitted Poitiers himself on April 15, and gave orders that the Maid should be at once conducted from that place to the city of Tours, there to be equipped with all that was needed for the campaign that lay before her.

The Dauphin was anxious that nothing should be lacking in her equipment. Tours was celebrated for its armourers, and Joan's great

height made it, no doubt, an easy matter to provide all that was necessary, without specially making pieces of a smaller size. She was to have a complete suit of white armour, including a helmet which entirely covered the head and neck, a gorget reaching as far as the heart-bone, and then the great steel corselet which guarded the whole body down to the waist. The shoulders and arms, the hips and thighs each had their own protection of stout steel plates. Altogether the total weight must have been very great, and no further evidence is required to prove the magnificent physique of the Maid than the undoubted fact that she was able to bear all this weight of armour for whole days together on the field of battle.

The Dauphin offered her a sword also, but she would have none of it, and asked instead that a message might be sent to St. Catherine de Fierbois, the place where she had rested for a night on her way to Chinon, and that search might be made behind the altar for an ancient sword which her "Voices" had told her was there buried. Nothing was known of such a sword, but a messenger was sent and search was made, and great was the sensation in Tours when the news came back that the sword was actually discovered. It was found buried in the

earth, all covered with rust, and marked with five crosses. The clergy of Fierbois polished it up, and the rust was easily removed, after which it was brought to Tours and put once more into serviceable condition by a professional armourer. Several sheaths were presented for it. The clergy of Fierbois sent one of red velvet, and the people of Tours had another made of cloth of gold. But such gorgeous equipments were, in the eyes of the Maid, ill-suited for the stern task which lay before her, and she ordered yet a third, to be made of plain leather, serviceable and strong.

The next point was the Standard, and this Joan herself designed. It was to be of white linen, embroidered with silk and covered all over with *fleurs de lys*. On the one side, under the two holy names, JHESUS ✠ MARIA, was a representation of God the Father seated on the clouds, and holding the globe in His hand, while on each side a kneeling angel held up a *fleur de lys* to crave His blessing. On the other side were the royal arms of France, with two angels as supporters. A smaller pennant showed the Annunciation, and the Angel, kneeling before our Blessed Lady, once more held the lily of France in his hand, and offered it for her acceptance. In all her battles the Maid always

bore her Standard in her hand, lest she should strike any man with the sword, and she loved it most of all her possessions. The design was directly commanded her by her "Voices"; she regarded it as a holy thing, and the very symbol of her mission. "Take thy Standard," the "Voices" had said, "and bear it without fear in the name of the King of Heaven." So she went forth, bearing it, as to a holy war, the type and example of Christian chivalry in battle.

We have more than one description, written at this period, of the appearance which the Maid presented and of the impression which she made. De Boulainvilliers, writing to the Duke of Milan, said of her: "The Maid has the beauty which her task demands, something masculine in her carriage; she speaks but little, but always singularly to the point. Her voice is high, as a woman's should be; she eats hardly at all, and of wine drinks even less. She is fond of the management of horses and of all feats of arms; likes men of war and of good breeding, but is only repelled by crowds and noisy conversation. Her tears are habitual and abundant, her face is cheerful and serene, no one was ever so inaccessible to fatigue, so that she can stay six whole days and nights without even removing a single piece of her armour.

She has a great veneration for the King." Or here is another description, from a letter which the young Seigneur of Laval wrote to his mother on June 8: "I saw her mount, all in white armour except her head, and carrying a little battle-axe in her hand. Her horse was a great black charger, which was waiting for her at the door of her house, and it plunged and would not let her mount. 'Lead him to the Cross,' she cried—it stands in the middle of the road, in front of the chapel—and as soon as he was there, he stood as if he were tied fast, and let her mount without once moving. Then she turned herself to the door of the church close by, and said in a voice which was sweet and womanly, 'Ye priests and churchmen, make processions and pray to God.' Then, 'Forward, forward,' she cried, and passed on her way with her standard flying, borne by a handsome page, still holding her axe in her hand, while her brother, who came a week ago, went on with her, he, too, all in white armour."

The young girl, who only a few weeks before had described herself unable to ride, had not taken long to master all the arts of war, and to make herself a complete warrior.

By the 25th of April the Maid had come from Tours as far as Blois, on her way towards

Orleans. At Blois she ordered yet another banner to be prepared, to bear the image of Christ crucified. Round this banner twice a day she gathered the priests who accompanied the army, and bade them sing the antiphons of Our Lady. To this ceremony she invited the soldiers to come, but, at the same time, told them she cared for none who were not in the grace of God. "Go to confession," she used to say, "and then you may come to our Confraternity." Such was her influence over the rough men of the army, that the camp, while she was present, was free from oaths and gaming, and from all the greater evils which, in that age especially, were looked upon as the inseparable accompaniments of an army in the field.

Before she would enter upon the actual campaign, there was one thing which Joan felt bound to do. Hopeless as the effort was, she felt it right to try to induce the English to retire before her as the messenger of God, and in this way to avoid bloodshed. So she dictated a letter and sent it on to the English forces by two heralds.

This remarkable document, which has come down to us in several texts, all of which agree in the main features of the contents, bore the

heading IHESUS, MARIA, and was written as a direct appeal from the Maid herself to the King of England, in the person of his commanders and the soldiers of his force. She ordered him, in the name of the King of Heaven, by whom she herself was sent, to give up to her the keys of all the good towns he had seized. She was leader in the war (*chef de guerre*), she said, "and would have mercy on all if only they would submit to her, but otherwise she would drive them forth whether they would or no." "Know ye," she goes on, "that the Maid has come from the King of Heaven, to put you out of France, man by man; and she promises and assures you that she will sound so great a call to arms as for a thousand years has not been heard in France." Then she turns to the archers and men-at-arms. "Think not," she tells them, "that the right is on your side, for never will you hold France from the King of Heaven, the Son of Mary. King Charles shall hold it, the true heir to whom God has given it, and he will enter Paris in goodly company. If you do not believe the messages of God and of the Maid of Orleans, wheresoever we find you we will deal a mighty blow, and we will see who has the better right, you or the King of Heaven."

It was not a diplomatic letter, and was received by the English with mixed feelings of anger and derision. They kept one of the heralds prisoner, and threatened, in spite of the universal law of nations, which ever regarded the person of a herald as sacrosanct, that they would burn him alive. Fortunately they did not carry out their threat. But from the receipt of this letter date the feelings of burning hatred with which the English party always regarded the Maid. No doubt, knowing her only by hearsay, they really believed the hateful things they said of her, and witchcraft and satanic possession were the simplest explanation they could give of her astonishing influence and apparently miraculous success.

The start was made from Blois a few days later, as strange an outset as ever was made by a fighting army. In front marched the clergy singing in unison the invocation of the Holy Spirit, "Veni Creator Spiritus." Immediately in their rear rode Joan herself, the *chef de guerre* of the relieving force, leading her troops to victory and honour. Full of confidence in the certain success of her soldiers, she wished to advance along the right bank of the Loire, so as to come immediately upon the main body of the besieging force, whose forts and

lines were almost entirely upon this side of the town. But her advice was overruled — the leaders of her party had not yet come to place the implicit trust in the counsels of her “Voices” which her constant successes afterwards inspired—and the more prudent course was adopted of marching along the left bank. They intended to pass the city by and then enter by the eastern or Burgundy gate, which was much less strongly invested than was the western side. In ordinary weather the plan seemed likely to succeed, but as it happened, a strong wind was blowing from the east, and it was impossible for the boats, which were to carry the cattle and stores they had brought, to get up stream with both wind and current strong against them. When, therefore, Joan arrived opposite Orleans the position seemed to be one of considerable danger, for the English had only to cross the stream, which they could do under the protection of their own guns, and attack the French army in flank. The Maid had passed the night on the bare ground in much pain and discomfort from the unaccustomed weight of her armour, and was bitterly disappointed when she found out the trick that had been played upon her, and how the counsel of her “Voices” had been

contemned. It was just at that moment that Dunois, the Bastard of Orleans, as he was called, the illegitimate half-brother of that Duke of Orleans who was in captivity in England, crossed the river to welcome her to Orleans. He was at the moment in command of the beleaguered garrison.

“Are you the Bastard of Orleans?” said Joan, as soon as he was landed. “I am,” said he, “and right glad am I that you are come.” “Was it you, then, who ordered that I should come by this left bank of the river instead of marching directly against Talbot and the English?” Dunois acknowledged that he with others had been responsible for the change of plans. “In the name of God,” the Maid burst out indignantly, “know that the counsel of Our Lord is better and wiser than yours. You thought to deceive me and you have only deceived yourself. I bring you the greatest succour that ever came either to knight or to city—not of my own strength, but from God Himself, who has listened to the prayer of St. Louis and St. Charlemagne, and will not have it that the enemies of France should hold at once the person of your Duke and also his city.”

Then, in a moment, her mood became milder.

“Fear not,” she said, “the wind will change, and none shall hinder the provisions from entering the town.” And even as she spoke, before the words had well left her lips, the wind changed, and the little flotilla of boats, already laden with the provisions, was able to pass on its way. The gate of Orleans was reached without mishap, and the beleaguered town was once more supplied with victuals without the English having stirred a foot to prevent it. The first object of the expedition had been already attained.

But there still remained a second difficulty. There was no transport available to enable the army of relief to follow the same route. Joan’s “Voices” were now seen to have been right, and the military commanders to have been wrong. There was nothing for it but for the army to go back to Blois, cross the river at that point, and then march back on Orleans by the way that she had wished. Joan herself, at Dunois’ fervent request, consented to cross over at once with him to Orleans, where her arrival would be of the greatest value to restore the spirits of the garrison. Ever since the wind had changed so suddenly, apparently obeying the command of the Maid, Dunois had been filled with enthusiastic faith in his new ally.

Accordingly, with a small force of two hundred lances, they crossed over to the other side, the wind being now wholly favourable, "a very miracle of God," as an eye-witness says. All through the English made no sort of opposition, losing thereby a great opportunity. It seemed to all that Talbot and the other leaders were struck with terror at the mere coming of the Maid.

The next day was passed at Reuilly, a few miles above Orleans, waiting till evening came in order to avoid too great a crush when the entry was made into the town of Orleans. Then, at eight o'clock in the evening, clad in full armour and riding upon a white horse, the Maid entered Orleans in triumph by torchlight. It was Friday evening, April 29th, 1429.

An enormous number of people pressed out to meet her. The joy of the city knew no bounds. "If they had seen God Himself descend among them," writes the chronicler of the siege, "their joy could not have been greater." Slowly and triumphantly she rode through the crowds, the Bastard of Orleans himself riding upon her right hand. Men and women, and even little children, pressed around her, eager to touch some part of her armour, or her charger, or her banner, as she passed on

her way. In the crush one of the torches set fire to the standard. "Then, forthwith, she struck the spurs into her horse, and lightly she turned him on the standard, and, with her own hands, crushed out the flames, as one might do who had long followed the wars."

On they went into Orleans. And first, as was but right, they went to the Cathedral of the Holy Rood, there to return thanks to God Almighty for the wonderful issues of the day; and, that duty over, on to the house of Jacques Boucher, treasurer to the Duke of Orleans, where her lodgings had been appointed. That night Joan made the little daughter of her host, a child of nine years old, share her couch, nor would she take any nourishment after all the fatigue of the last few days except only a few crusts of bread soaked in a glass of wine and water. Her abstinence was at all times almost as remarkable as her piety.

It is impossible to overrate the difference which the mere coming of the Maid had made to the spirit and courage of the defenders of Orleans. Up to that moment they had been depressed, miserable, cowardly. It is Dunois himself, an unexceptionable witness, who tells us that whereas, the day before the Maid's arrival, two Englishmen would have put eight

Frenchmen of the Royal army to flight, as soon as she had entered the town, “four or five hundred of our men would have held their own against the entire English army.”

She had come at last—the Maid of Prophecy—sent from God for their deliverance. And already she had shown them a sign to prove the source of her power. Had not the wind changed at her command? Now God was with them, who could be against them? As a French poet of the period sings :

Ung de nous en vaut mieux que cent
Soubs l'estandard de la Pucelle.*

Truly to Orleans there had come at last *le grand Secours*—“the great Deliverance”—in the person of Joan the Maid.

* *Mystère du Siège d'Orléans*, v. 12,332.

CHAPTER V.

The Relief of Orleans.

THE Maid had succeeded in entering the beleagured town, and her coming had done much to raise the spirits of the garrison, and, in a corresponding degree, to depress those of the besiegers. No man now doubted her power, or that she was helped by some supernatural agency, and this belief was a force of tremendous value ; for the soldiers of Orleans felt that heaven itself was enlisted on their side ; while the English, on the other hand, thought that they were now fighting not against flesh and blood, but against witchcraft and sorcery and evil powers of every kind. The moral effect was very great, and can hardly be exaggerated. The rôles of the two contending armies seemed at once to be reversed. The beleagured garrison, no longer questioning how long they could hold out, or when the inevitable surrender must at last be made, themselves took the initiative and became the besiegers, driving the English by one successful assault after another to abandon the various forts and strong places they had

set up round the town, and, in an incredibly short space of time, forced them to relinquish the prey which only a few short days before had seemed about to fall almost immediately into their hands. From a merely military point of view the relief of Orleans, in all the circumstances of the case, must always remain one of the most astonishing episodes in all human history.

The first two or three days after Joan's arrival brought a brief respite from the constant fighting that had been going on. The English forces were discouraged and unwilling to attack, and the French army of relief being still absent, having gone back to Blois, the time was not yet propitious for the garrison to take the initiative. So Joan rode daily through the city to give the people a chance of seeing her, for they crowded round her lodging and almost broke in the door of her house in their eagerness to get a glimpse of their deliverer. She took the opportunity to summon the English once more to surrender. A second letter was sent, couched probably in much the same terms as the first, but the only reply was an outburst of jeers and mockery. Nothing else could have been expected.

On May 4th the French forces returned from Blois, this time marching by the route which

Joan had selected. They passed at the back of the English, round the north side of the city, and came into the town, as had Joan herself, by the eastern gate. The priests, with Pasquerel, the Maid's confessor, at their head, marched once more in front, with Joan's banner of the Crucified Saviour to lead them. The advance was unopposed, and they were as safe as if they had been in their own churches, for not an English shot was fired to impede their progress.

The entry was made before noon, and quite early in the morning Joan rode out to meet them and to welcome them to Orleans. When she returned she was weary with her ride, and lay down to rest on a bed, while d'Aulon, her appointed equerry, also reclined on a sofa in the same room. Neither of them knew that any further action was projected for that day.

Meanwhile, so soon as the new reinforcements were within the walls, it seemed clear to Dunois that it would be well to take advantage of the obvious discouragement of the English and to begin the attack on the easternmost point of their fortifications, the fortress of St. Loup. Regarding the Maid as indeed sent of God to help them, but as necessarily debarred by the very fact of her sex from actual fighting, he did not think it necessary to send to tell her of the

resolution he had come to. So it came to pass that the first fight began while Joan, knowing nothing of it, was slumbering peacefully on her bed in Orleans.

Suddenly she awoke and leapt from the bed, calling out to d'Aulon, who was still asleep. "In God's name," she cried, "my 'Voices' have awoke me. I must go against the English at once, but I know not in which direction I am needed." D'Aulon leapt up and began to help the Maid into her armour as quickly as he could. Already the streets were full of people, and the cry went that the English were victorious and the French were being driven back. The moment she was ready Joan ran down the stairs where she found her page, Louis de Contes. "Ha! you rascally boy!" she cried to him; "would you let the blood of France be spilt and not tell me? Go and get my horse." So soon as the horse came she mounted, took her standard, which was passed to her through the window, and galloped straight off to the fighting, not stopping even to ask where it was, but making sparks fly from her horse's hoofs, so eye-witnesses tell us, as she galloped through the streets. She found the assault was already being abandoned, and the French retiring to the city. "Turn your faces round," she cried to

them, and herself led them back to the assault. She took no actual part herself in the fighting, but for three hours she stood on the edge of the moat, her standard always in her hand, cheering on the attackers both with voice and action. Talbot advanced with reinforcements to aid his men, but was intercepted by the men of Orleans and obliged to turn back. Towards evening the fort capitulated and all who were in it were killed or taken prisoners. And now, the excitement of the battle over, Joan's womanly nature reasserted itself and she burst into a flood of tears as she thought of so many souls sent unconfessed and suddenly before their Judge.

The next day was Ascension Day, and though Joan herself was eager to press the advantage and to give the English no respite, it was decided that nothing should be done, out of regard for the sanctity of the day. So she seized the opportunity to go to the Sacraments herself, and to issue a proclamation bidding all the soldiers of the garrison do the same; lest they too, as had happened to so many of the English the day before, should die in their sins. Then she determined to make her third effort to gain her ends without bloodshed, and to induce the English to withdraw. A new letter was written, in which she made her appeal "for the

third and last time." It was attached to an arrow—the Maid explaining in her letter that she took this unusual course because the English had detained her herald—and was shot across the river to the fortress of Les Tourelles, which commanded the southern approaches to the city. The English picked up the letter and cried out, "News from the harlot of Orleans." The Maid burst once more into tears at the insult, but soon recovered herself and dried her eyes, saying that her "Voices" had spoken to her and that she had news from the King of Heaven.

A second council of war was held this same day, advantage being taken of the lull in the fighting. It was determined to make a feigned attack on one of the forts to the west of the town, in the hope that all the English who were across the river would come back to the assistance of their own men, thus leaving the way open for the real attack, which was to be on the forts due south of the town, commanding the bridge head. Joan, to her great indignation, was once more not fully trusted with the plans, though to appease her anger Dunois afterwards told her all. In the event the feint was omitted and the attack was made at once upon the southern forts.

Early on the morning of Friday, May 6th, a party of French soldiers set out to attack the small fort of St. Jean le Blanc. But when they arrived they found it undefended, the commander of the larger forts having thought it wise to withdraw his men from this small outpost. They were, therefore, returning to the town from their useless expedition, when the English rallied forth from the next fort, that known as Les Augustins, and took them in flank. They gave way in disorder and were on the point of ignominious flight. But just at that moment Joan and La Hire, one of the principal of the French commanders, arrived on the further bank, having brought their horses across by a temporary bridge of boats. The sight of the Maid at once put courage into the flying Frenchmen; they rallied round her and charged back upon the English, driving them back into their fortifications. At the gate stood one particular Englishman of giant size, with great valour, keeping the way against all comers, until he fell mortally wounded by a shot from a French hand-gun. The French charged into the fortress, led by d'Aulon and a Spaniard called Alfonso de Partada. Joan followed close behind them, calling ever as she went "Forward. Forward boldly, for the love of God." The

English gave way before them, there was a hand-to-hand fight within the fortifications, and before long the French were completely victorious and the fort of Les Augustins was in their hands. The way was clear for the far more important attack upon Les Tourelles, the capture of which would once more open the southern roads into the city.

* The Maid went back to Orleans weary and in pain. She had hurt her foot slightly with a *chausse-trappe*. Still she was determined that though it was now too late to begin an attack on Les Tourelles that evening, she would not allow the English any more time to recover their loss than was absolutely necessary. So when a message reached her from the Council to say that as the town was now well provisioned it had been determined to delay before making any further attack, she broke out in indignation. "You have had your Council," she said, "and I too; I have had mine. Know that the counsel given by my Lord stands first and will be accomplished—while yours will all come to nought." Then she turned to her chaplain and bade him rise early the next morning so that she might hear Mass before starting for the attack. "Keep near to me also," she said, "for I shall have more need of you to-morrow

than ever before. "For I shall be wounded to-morrow, so that the blood will flow from my body, here above my heart." This was not the first time that Joan had foretold her wound. She had done so almost in the same words, before the King at Chinon, and the prophecy was announced in a letter to the Duke of Brabant which bears the date April 22nd, 1429—fifteen days, that is, before the event. It is then one of the best attested predictions in history, and it extended, according to the evidence of an Orleans lawyer, given at the trial, not only to the wound itself, but also to the capture of Les Tourelles, then supposed to be impregnable, and to her own return by the bridge although several arches were broken down.

These preliminary successes were, of course, important enough, both in the way of raising the spirits of the garrison and of opening the path to more serious undertakings, but the retaking of Les Augustins was not in itself a very great matter. It was necessary, in order to make any real impression on the military position, that this beginning should be followed up by the assault and capture of the far more important fortress of Les Tourelles. This it was, therefore, hopeless as the task seemed from a military point of view, that the Maid was now

determined to undertake. Some accounts say that she did so against the opinion and advice of the more experienced leaders. In any case she received but scant encouragement from them. The initiative of the undertaking, as well as its successful ending, are alike due to her alone, and to the guidance given her by the "Voices" that never failed her.

A few words of explanation may be useful in order that the exact nature of the operation proposed may be understood. The whole city of Orleans stood on the northern side of the Loire. Access was cut off by the English forces on the west and north of the town, though the east remained comparatively clear. The great road to the south was entirely closed. Two arches of the bridge were broken down, and beyond them, on a little island close by the further shore, making the last escarpment of the bridge that had been, was the strong fort of Les Tourelles, in English hands, joined by a wooden draw-bridge to the further shore. The bridge-head was surrounded by further fortifications, held by the defenders of Les Tourelles, and it was upon these that the attack was about to be made. The outlying forts beyond this again, Les Augustins and St Jean le Blanc, were those which had already been retaken by the

French. The main body of the English was on the northern shore, investing the city, and no large force had been detached to hold Les Tourelles, its natural strength being deemed sufficient to withstand any assault. Should it, however, be taken by the French, the road to the south would be opened, and the siege of the town would at once become ineffective. The position was therefore one of the highest importance.

★ Joan rose at sunrise the following morning, Saturday, May 7th, in order to hear Mass before the day's work began, and immediately afterwards led her forces to the attack. ★ The assault was made from every side at once, and the scene must have been a stirring one. "Well did the English fight," says d'Aulon, "for the French were scaling the fortification at one and the same time in various places, making their attack at the summit of the walls with such reckless courage that to see them you would have thought they believed themselves immortal. But the English drove them back again and again, throwing them down from the summit to the bottom ; fighting them with bows and handguns, with axes, lances, and leaden maces, and even with their fists, so that there was much loss in killed and wounded." And all the time,

amid the cries of the besiegers and the besieged, with the thick sulphurous smoke of the guns all round her, despite the flight of the arrows and other missiles, through the long morning, Joan moved about among her soldiers urging them on to the attack, encouraging them to fresh feats of valour.

At last, about one o'clock, Joan herself set a ladder against the wall, and coming so close was recognised in spite of the thick smoke by one of the defenders. An arrow, well and truly aimed, penetrated her armour and passed right through her shoulder, standing at a hand's breadth behind. A shout from the English defenders greeted her fall. Now that the witch's blood had been drawn, her power would doubtless be destroyed. Their spirits rose as rapidly as those of the French were falling. Men raised Joan from the ground and carried her to the rear. With her own hands, though weeping with the pain and shock, she drew out the arrow, and, though she utterly refused to allow one of the soldiers to use a charm which he offered her, saying that she would rather die than thus offend God, she permitted the wound to be dressed with olive oil.

Meanwhile, without the Maid to cheer them on, the French were becoming weary, and their

attacks were less determined. The leaders were saying to one another that after all it was but a foolish enterprise, and one that should never have been undertaken ; that there was no use their assaulting a fortress which was so strong that "in a month it could scarcely be captured"; and at length Dunois came to the conclusion that, as "there was no more hope of victory that day," the wisest thing to be done was to sound the recall and take the men back again into the city. The enterprise had failed, and nothing remained but to recognise the fact.

But just at this moment the Maid returned to her place, and, hurrying up to Dunois, begged him to give her a little more time. He assented somewhat against his will, and she went away alone into a vineyard and there remained for some minutes in solitary prayer. Then she returned and once more led the troops on to the attack. "Watch," she cried, "till my standard touches the walls and then forward for victory." The English were dumbfounded at seeing "The White Witch," whom they had thought to be dead, or at least sorely wounded and out of the conflict, back again in her old position, and once more lost confidence. The French rushed on furiously to the attack, ladders were reared once more against the walls, axes and swords

were plied in hand-to-hand conflict ; “never had living men seen such an onslaught.” Driven back from the walls, and finding their position fast becoming untenable, the English sought to fly over the drawbridge back into the strong keep of Les Tourelles itself, encompassed by the river. But the drawbridge itself was on fire, it was cracking under their feet, all enveloped in thick, evil-smelling clouds of smoke. While the fighting had been going on, the people of Orleans had constructed a fire-ship, and, towing it up stream, had allowed it to float down under the bridge. The structure was already dangerous, but most of the English crossed it successfully, only to find a new peril in the fort itself from a quarter whence no danger had been apprehended. The bridge leading to Orleans had long been broken down ; two arches had been destroyed ; no men, so they had thought, could come by that way to the attack. Yet there they were, advancing as if by miracle, walking, as it seemed, upon the air, assaulting the tower in front while their victorious pursuers attacked in the rear. “The Orleans people had found an old *gouttière*, long, but not long enough to cross the gap above the stream. A carpenter had fixed to it a beam, supported by stays, and so enabled its further extremity to rest on the intact

arch on the Tourelles. Across this 'Brig of Dread' walked Nicole de Girame, the Prior of the Knights of Malta, other men-at-arms following him in single file."* Thus the impregnable Tourelles were assaulted on both sides at once, and held only by a confused and disheartened band of defenders. The drawbridge behind blazed up and became impassable; Glendale, the English captain, and his rearguard found their retreat cut off; the bridge broke beneath the weight of their armour and they fell helpless into the river beneath, only to be dragged under at once and drowned without hope of rescue. Joan following behind burst into tears once more as she witnessed the terrible scene, and throwing herself upon her knees, set herself to pray for the souls of those who had perished. Meanwhile the attack from Orleans was being pressed home, victorious and fresh soldiers pressed into the fortress, and in the terrible mêlée that followed not one of the English escaped alive; all were taken prisoners or put to the sword. The Tourelles had fallen; the impossible had been achieved; Orleans was relieved, and the Maid in four short days had won a victory which changed the history of Europe, and ranks as one of the decisive battles of the world. The relief

* Andrew Lang, *The Maid of France*, p. 139.

of Orleans settled, once and for all, the question whether or not there was to be such a thing as a great French nation, or whether France was to be a mere appanage of England. The unwavering faith and intrepid courage of a single person had supplied the answer, and she was only a peasant maiden, seventeen years of age—"The Maid of Orleans" !

The bells of Orleans rang out merrily across the river, where Les Tourelles and its drawbridge were still blazing and lighting up the darkness ; the prophecy of the Maid was fulfilled completely, incredible as it had sounded but one short day before, and she returned wearied and wounded but gloriously victorious, entering Orleans by the road of the broken bridge.

CHAPTER VI.

The Crowning of the King.

IT is only natural to ask what the rest of the English forces were doing thus to allow their strongest and most important fortress to be taken under their eyes, without making the smallest effort to save it. The answer seems to be that to all appearance there was nothing to be feared. As Talbot watched the fighting from the other side of the river, he saw his men apparently completely victorious. Every attack had been successfully repelled ; the White Witch was severely wounded, if not actually dead ; the assault had been, according to all military experience, hopeless from the beginning, and when the French bugles sounded the recall, it was only the natural end to a useless effort on their part. There was no need for reinforcement, his men were easily holding their own. It was the return of the Maid and her own indomitable energy which in ten minutes had utterly changed the whole state of the case and brought so rapid a ruin on his cause that it had been impossible to send auxiliaries. Les Tourelles had fallen

before the English had thoroughly realised that it was in danger. But now that the way to the South again lay open, and that the French army in Orleans had been reinforced from Blois, it was impossible for him any longer to maintain his position, and immediate retirement was accordingly decreed.

The next morning was Sunday, May 8. Joan rose early, in spite of her wound, though she could not yet bear her armour, and contented herself with wearing a mere coat of mail. Her first thought was for the obligations of the day. She sent for a portable altar, and had two Masses said in the open air, the whole French army devoutly assisting. When the second Mass was finished, Joan, for the first time, showed an interest in the enemy's movements. "Which way are their faces turned?" she asked of those about her. "They are retiring towards Meux," was the reply; "shall we pursue them?" "No," replied the Maid, "let them go their way this time. It is not Messire's will that we should attack them now. Let them go; you will have them another time." It proves to how great a height the Maid's influence in military matters had already attained that she imposed her will upon them without difficulty, though the temptation to follow must have been great. The day

passed without bloodshed ; the English camp was looted and much spoil taken ; and the city of Orleans was given up to every kind of rejoicing, both within and without the churches. "The great Deliverance" has been celebrated ever since on the anniversary of this day, in the Fêtes of Orleans.

On the Monday Joan left Orleans on her way to Tours, whither the Dauphin was to come from Chinon to meet her. The first part of her task was accomplished, the second was pressed urgently upon her by her "Voices." She had delivered Orleans, she had now to see the Dauphin crowned King at Rheims with the holy *ampoule* of St. Rémi. What use was it to urge that this was impossible, that the whole district in between was held by English garrisons, and that Rheims itself was subject to the English King? After all, it was not more impossible than the relief of Orleans had seemed a month before, and to Joan herself human considerations counted for nothing when her "Voices" gave her clear and definite commands. She threw herself at the Dauphin's feet. "Noble Dauphin," she cried, "come now and be crowned at Rheims ; I am commanded to bid you to come. Doubt not, therefore, but come, for in that city you will be honourably crowned." The Dauphin

was silent, but Christopher d'Harcourt, one of his counsellors, asked the question which was in the thoughts of all. "Have your 'Voices' given you their counsel?" "They have," she replied. "Then will you not tell us how it is that they speak to you?" The Maid blushed, and was unwilling for a moment to reply, but then she answered, "Sometimes when I am distressed by the unbelief of others concerning the message which God bids me deliver, I go away by myself and pray, and then a voice comes to me and says, 'Go on, daughter of God, go forward. I will help you.' And when I hear that voice," she concluded, "I am filled with a great joy, and long always to be such as I then feel myself."

The obvious enthusiasm of the Maid and the wonderful success of her first endeavours brought many to her support, but there were not wanting others in the Dauphin's court who still declined to trust her thoroughly. Amongst these none was more constant in his opposition or more influential in his detraction of her virtues than La Trémoille, the unworthy favourite of the Dauphin. Charles himself, always weak and vacillating, was only half persuaded, believing in his heart but always letting his will be swayed by La Trémoille and others. So the

question what should be done was long delayed, and at last it was decided that the young Duc d'Alençon, always one of Joan's most loyal supporters, should take the field with the Maid and a small army, to try to clear the road by destroying the English garrisons on the road to Rheims. Preparations were pushed on apace, and by the end of the month everything was ready to commence. Orleans was to be the base, the whole valley of the Loire was to be cleared of the enemy to begin with, and then the advance towards Rheims would in its turn be possible.

The English held three strong fortresses in the valley of the Loire ; Beaugency, Meun, and Jargeau, all situated on the river ; the two first-named below and the last above the city of Orleans. To drive them from these strongholds was the first aim of the campaign.

It was the 11th of June that the French, led by d'Alençon and the Maid, marched out of Orleans to attack Jargeau, where Suffolk was entrenched with some six hundred men behind strong fortifications, needing only to hold out for a short time, for Fastolf was already advancing from Paris with a large force to the relief of these threatened fortresses. Time, therefore, was an essential element of the position. Arrived

before Jargeau, there was the usual doubt about the feasibility of storming the town, but Joan herself was in no doubt, and as d'Alençon was in command, she had little difficulty in getting her own way. "If God were not my guide," she said, "I would far rather be herding sheep than exposing myself to all these dangers, but, as it is, I am assured that success is certain." That day there was nothing but a skirmish, wherein Joan's personal valour was again the deciding factor, and the suburbs of Jargeau were occupied. The great attack was to be on the following day.

It began with a cannonade of artillery. This soon opened a practicable breach, and the assault was duly delivered with scaling ladders and all the rest of the usual apparatus. The Maid was climbing a ladder, standard in hand, when a stone thrown from the ramparts fell upon her helmet, and stretched her upon the ground. She was up again, however, in a moment, crying: "On, my friends, on. Messire has judged the English. In an hour all will be ours." The French made a desperate effort, and with complete success. "In an instant the town was taken," says d'Alençon, "the English were in full flight running for the bridges, and more than a thousand men were slain in the

pursuit." Suffolk himself was taken prisoner by a simple squire, one Guillaume Renault. "Are you a knight?" he asked, and being told no, "Then I hereby dub you knight," he said, "and I surrender to you."

Two days had passed, and the first of the three English fortresses had already fallen.

The next day was passed quietly enough at Orleans, but Joan was never the person to let an opportunity slip, and on the 13th she determined at once to press on the attack upon Meun, the nearest of the two fortresses below Orleans, which still remained in English hands. They set out on the 14th; the next day, the 15th, the bridge-head at Meun, which was fortified in the same way as that of Orleans, was in French hands. Leaving a garrison there to maintain the advantage gained, Joan herself left at once to attack Beaugency. Talbot had already retreated from this place, and only a small garrison was left behind. Joan arrived before the place on the 16th, and on the 17th it was in her hands—just in time, for Fastolf's army of relief was already but a few leagues away. The surrender almost amounted to a betrayal.

Six days had passed, and two of the English fortresses were already in the hands of the

Maid, while the third was rendered useless by the French garrison at the captured bridge-head.

The real issue of this brief campaign of the Loire was now to be decided. It was no longer a question of attacking fortresses ; the two armies stood face to face, and a great battle seemed inevitable. The English sent heralds to defy the Maid, and to induce her to come down from the little height on which her forces were now posted, and offer battle in the plain. "Not so," replied the Maid, "go to your rest, for it is already late. To-morrow, if it please God and Our Lady, we will see you at close quarters."

The French, who had so often been beaten in the open by the English archers, were again unwilling to offer battle, and once more it was Joan who urged them on. "Look to your spurs," was the only counsel she would give d'Alençon. "Why?" said he, "do you think then that we must retreat?" "No," she replied, "but you will need them to pursue."

The attack the next morning was begun by La Hire with some eight horsemen to act as a vanguard. Joan was much annoyed that she was not allowed to ride with this party, but it was, no doubt, the more prudent course to keep

her with the main body. La Hire was favoured by a lucky chance. As they rode forward towards the English position, a stag broke from cover and dashed on in front of them. It fled right into the English advanced guard, and they as they saw it raised a view-halloo. The unwise act told La Hire where to find them. He charged down at once upon them, and taking them by surprise, cut them to pieces before they had time even to stand to their arms. The sudden onslaught demoralised the English, and when the main body of the French followed up the attack, they met only with a half-hearted resistance. Before long the whole army was in hopeless confusion, the men flying for their lives, while the victorious French pressed in pursuit. Dunois puts their loss at four thousand men. Talbot himself was taken prisoner.

The Maid came up with the rearguard after the greater part of the fighting was already over. Her heart was filled with pity at the sight of the wounded and the dying. One English soldier in particular she noticed, grievously wounded in the head. She sprang from her horse, and raised his head in her hands, comforting him and exhorting him until a priest came up and received his last confession just before he died. She could steel her heart to

war for the sake of France, but could never control her pity for the stricken foe. Nothing, in her eyes, could be so terrible as that even one of her enemies, if she could help it, should go unshriven before his Judge.

It was just a week since she had marched out of Orleans; a week of unbroken and unexampled victory; and the campaign was already at an end. The whole valley of the Loire was in her hands, and the road to Rheims now remained to be won, in order that the second part of her mission might be accomplished and the King might be crowned in the Cathedral of St. Rémi. From a purely military point of view it looks to us now as if it might have been wiser to march at once upon Paris, but Joan was faithful to her "Voices" and to the course which they prescribed. Rheims, therefore, was to be her immediate objective.

But even now, after this week of magnificent triumphs, Charles was still distrustful. La Trémoille, Joan's constant enemy, was ever at hand to breathe slanders against her, and the Dauphin was as weak as water, at the mercy of the last person who could get his ear. Nothing but "long and weary councils" followed, wasting valuable time. Joan was in despair as ten days thus slipped away. At last she

triumphed over the opposing counsels, and by the end of June the army had started on its march.

The first great city on their way was that of Troyes, and there the Maid arrived on July 5th. She wrote, or rather dictated, a letter commanding the town to surrender, and promising that the inhabitants should be well treated in every way. The burgesses of Troyes sent the letter on to Rheims, with many mockeries against the Maid, saying that they had for their part "sworn on the Precious Body of Jesus to resist to the death." Bold words—not to be fulfilled, as the event soon showed.

The position of the French army before Troyes was by no means a happy one. The supplies were running short ; the communications with the base were badly planned. The council met, and almost unanimously advised retreat. The Archbishop of Rheims was especially strong on this point, and only as a last thought was Joan herself called in. "In two days," she said to the Dauphin, "Troyes shall be yours ; only have patience and wait." Once more her single voice carried the day.

From that moment Joan worked with superhuman energy. Since more fitting materials were lacking, she seized upon faggots, doors,

woodwork of every kind to serve as shelter for the attack. The whole night was passed in making preparations. Early in the morning she herself led the attack. But there was no need to press it home ; the very sight of the Maid was enough for the faint-hearted citizens. The Bishop himself was sent to make the best terms that he could. Troyes had capitulated, and by nine o'clock in the morning, the 9th of July, the Dauphin and Joan, riding side by side, entered the town in triumph without striking a blow. Châlons followed the example of Troyes a few days later, and Rheims itself was not slow to take the same course. On July 16th, less than three weeks from the day on which he had set out from Gien, Charles VII entered Rheims.

Once more the impossible had been accomplished ; difficulties had melted away before his advance ; no sort of opposition had been offered to him upon his way ; and all was due solely to the indomitable courage and will of Joan, without whom he would have done nothing at all. The second part of the Maid's mission had been accomplished, and nothing now hindered the King of France from being duly crowned in the same place and manner as his predecessors.

The ceremony was fixed to take place on the

following day, Sunday, July 17th. In spite of the hurried preparations, the coronation was by no means without splendour and dignity. The holy *Ampoule* of oil was brought from St. Rémi to the Cathedral, the Archbishop of Rheims administered the coronation oath, anointed the Dauphin with the holy oils, and placed the crown upon his head, while the people cried aloud the national cry of "Noël," and the trumpets filled the whole cathedral with their sound. "And always during the whole mystery the Maid stood by the King, her standard in her hand. A right fair thing it was to see the goodly manners of the King and the Maid."* When at last all was over, and Charles rose from his knees, Joan herself knelt down before him, and, clasping his knees with her hands, as she was wont to do to her heavenly presences, "Noble King," she said to him, and it was the first time she had given him the title, "now is accomplished the Will of God, who commanded that I should raise the siege of Orleans, and bring you to this city of Rheims to receive your solemn consecration, that so you might show that you are the true King, and that France should be wholly yours."

* From a contemporary letter sent to the Queen. Quoted by Lang, p. 184.

Her mission was accomplished. It was her "Nunc Dimittis." "And great pity came upon all that heard her, and many wept at her words."*

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Somewhere among the crowd, doubtless in a more or less chosen spot, might have been seen two peasants, wondering at the unusual position in which they found themselves, and feeling, we may suppose, extremely uncomfortable and out of place in such surroundings. These were Jacques D'Arc and his brother, the father and uncle of the Maid, who had come up from Domremy to meet her, and were now lodged at the public expense as guests of the nation. When Jacques returned to Domremy a few weeks later he carried with him a great boon for the inhabitants of that village—nothing less than an exemption in the King's name from all taxes due to the State. Joan had been offered by the King whatever she might like to ask as a reward, but she had refused to take anything for herself, and had asked only this privilege for her kinsfolk and friends. So for three hundred years, until the Revolution put an end to this as to so many other privileges, the Register of

* From the letter already quoted.

the French Exchequer, opposite the names of the villages of Domremy and Greux, contains no returns of money paid, but, instead, the simple words of explanation, "A cause de la Pucelle," "For the sake of the Maid."

CHAPTER VII.

The Failure at Paris.

It is a point which is keenly debated among both the friends and the enemies of the Maid, how far the changed character of the events which followed the coronation of the King at Rheims ought or ought not to be regarded as due to a change in the supernatural influence by which she had hitherto been guided. There are some who contend that with the taking of Orleans and the crowning of the King her work was over, and that she ought then to have returned home and given up further effort. The attempt, they would say, to continue, when she no longer had warrant to do so, led inevitably to the disaster that followed.

This opinion is founded mainly on the alleged sayings of Joan herself, to the effect that, with the events of which we have spoken, her mission was accomplished. But when these sayings are closely examined, we find that, in reality, they are far from expressing a conviction that her work was done, and that now she ought to go back to Domremy and take up the old life once

more. That, indeed, was the desire of her own heart: the pomp of court life was no more in accord with her simplicity than was the clash of arms with her womanly tenderness. If she had been free to choose she would have left it all and gone back to the village and the obscurity of village life. But she was not free. The sense of a mission still only in part fulfilled would not let her go. It was not Charles VII or the courtiers of Rheims who were keeping her, but her own sense of duty, and, we can hardly doubt, the counsels of her heavenly protectors. Orleans was free, and the King was crowned, but the Maid in her heart was full of pity for the realm of France, still harried by war and overrun by hostile soldiery.

But on the other hand, since for the most part all the future was failure and loss, how can we venture to claim for it that it was worked out by Divine command, and with the help of supernatural guidance? Such a claim, if made for the events of the astonishing three months which ended with the crowning at Rheims, seems almost demanded by the facts, for such another twelve weeks of victory could scarcely be produced in all the world's history. But the case is very different for the period that followed the coronation, for then we have nothing but enter-

prises that failed and prophecies that lack fulfilment. Ought we not, it has been urged by some who are unwilling to allow that any part of Joan's mission was from God, to take the whole story into our consideration: to set the failures of the second period against the successes of the first, and to admit that Joan's "Voices" were as capable of misleading her at one time as they were of guiding her to triumph at another? In other words, is it not clear that her "Voices" were not supernatural at all, but simply the echo of her own personality—as likely to lead her to disaster as to victory?

The question is one which every student of the Maid's history is bound to ask himself, and it will be answered by many simply in accordance with their own predilections. But it is not true that we are thus driven to choose between the two horns of dilemma—obliged either to admit that the Maid went beyond her mission and failed in consequence, or else that she never in truth had a mission at all. There is a third answer possible, one which meets all the difficulties of the case, and which leaves the honour of the Maid untouched, while it explains fully the unhappy issue of the later period of her career.

God gives a call to His servants, bidding

them go forth and do the work which he sets before them, but it does not follow that the mission is fulfilled. The human will is free, and it is always open to all to put the call aside and leave the work undone. The mission, therefore, may fail through the unfaithfulness or want of zeal of him to whom God sends the call. That is obvious enough, but it is not the only way in which failure is produced. A man may be devoted heart and soul to the work to which he is called of God ; he may spend himself to the uttermost in his labours, working wisely and truly in every way, and yet there may be nothing but failure because others will not co-operate and forward what he is doing. In such a case the blame is theirs and not his—he has done all that he could, has responded fully and entirely to the call of God, and the fruitlessness of his labours is due solely to the fault of others. In God's sight the work he has done is not less meritorious than if it had been crowned with success : the labourer is rewarded not according to his success, but according to his faithful endeavours, and the fact of the divine call is in no way obscured or diminished by the actual failure of the enterprise. ¶ The success of God's work on earth is constantly dependent on human co-operation.

These thoughts will help us to understand the second part of Joan's career, which begins immediately after the coronation of the King. If the previous certainty of action has passed away, if the generalship which was formerly so clear and decisive now falters and is helpless, the fault is not Joan's, nor is it due to the failure of her "Voices," but to the King and his advisers. It is a story of genius thwarted, and of disaster brought upon a country by the machinations of false counsellors. If Joan had been allowed a free hand after Rheims, even to the degree that this was permitted her at Orleans and during the Loire campaign, there is little reason to doubt that she would have been able to make good her prophecy, and would have driven the English, "body by body," out of the "fair land of France." The explanation of her failure had been written down beforehand, in his book "*De Puella*," by the great Gerson, who by this time had himself passed away. In that treatise he fully recognises the Divine mission of the Maid, but he foresaw that the ingratitude and feebleness of the King's advisers might hinder the fulfilment of God's promises to her; he teaches expressly that this would prove nothing against the supernatural character of the favours already granted her, and he earnestly calls on

his fellow-countrymen to look to it that they did not prevent the good will of God towards them from having its full effect. He wrote, however, in vain, and his work, useless to his own generation, remains to us not only as an instance of the foresight of a great theologian, but also as a precious testimony and vindication of the Maid's actions.

The coronation had taken place on July 17. The King had intended to begin his advance against Paris the very next day. Had he done so in the full height of the enthusiasm evoked by his crowning and by the victories of the Maid, there is no saying what might have happened. Delay was the one thing to be dreaded: the moment was one emphatically for decisive action. So the generals thought, and so above all advised Joan herself. But the courtiers thought otherwise, and the courtiers were all-powerful with the new-crowned King.

In the English and Burgundian camp men were clear-sighted enough. They saw that it was to their interest to interpose delays in any way they could. Reinforcements were already on their way, marching hurriedly from Calais towards Paris. It was most important that they should arrive before Charles could invest the town. At all hazards he must be kept from any

immediate action, for at such a crisis every day counted.

This was the cause which led to the dispatch of a mission from the Duke of Burgundy to Rheims, ostensibly to discuss terms of peace. It arrived on the very day of the coronation. The dissimulation of Burgundy was obvious; he was sending recruits from Picardy to Paris at the very time he pretended to be longing for peace. But the plan fulfilled its object; three invaluable days were wasted by Charles in negotiations which never had a chance of success, and the Duke of Bedford entered Paris with strong reinforcements on the very day when Charles at length made up his mind to further action, and, yielding at last to Joan's entreaties, started on his march towards Paris.

The situation at this juncture is one that is hard for us to imagine. Paris was not, as Orleans had been, a loyal town held down by the enemy and eager to welcome its lawful sovereign. Not only was Paris in the hands of the English, but its own sentiment was English through and through—intensely and bitterly hostile to the true King of France. No answering sorties were to be expected from within its walls. No friendly hands would open the gates to the relieving forces if they succeeded in

making good their approach. [Paris was not French at all, but the centre of the English domination—English not by compulsion but by free choice. It was no case of relieving a beleaguered city, but of capturing a hostile fortress—the source as well as the symbol of the enemy's power. Paris seems to many of us nowadays to stand so completely for France and French feeling, that it is hard for us to realise that there was a time when Paris was an English town, and the centre of the anti-national sentiment.

The King started indeed for Paris on July 25, but it was a long time before he arrived at his goal. At first his march was a triumphal progress. Town after town opened its gates and received him—without even a sign of armed opposition. Soissons was on the direct line to Paris, and was the first to hand over its keys. After Soissons precious time was wasted and the direct route was abandoned in order to receive the submission of other and less important towns, Château-Thierry, Provins and Compiègne. Charles was always ready enough to put off the day when it should be necessary to make the assault on Paris—an assault in the success of which he did not believe, though he was forced on, against his will, by the

insistence of the Maid and of the other generals.

The delays were in no way pleasing to Joan, as may be easily imagined. She saw the precious moments slipping away ; captains and men alike were becoming demoralised ; and every day it became more clear that, left to himself, the King would never act. A decisive act on the part of the Maid was absolutely necessary unless the whole enterprise was to be left to fall through. She sent for d'Alençon one day, nearly a month after the start from Rheims, and told him her resolution. "Beau duc," she said, "prepare your men and the other captains. En mon Dieu, par mon martin,* I will see Paris nearer than I have yet seen it." The project met with d'Alençon's warm approval, and the other generals were as eager as himself. They set off for Paris on August 23, taking with them the best troops of the army, but without the King's leave, and apparently without his knowledge. Three days later they arrived at Saint-Denis and stood at last outside the walls of Paris.

Charles, his hand thus forced against his will, did not hurry. He had no choice but to follow ; there was nothing else left for him to do, but he

* Apparently her bâton or staff. It was the nearest approach to an oath that the Maid ever allowed herself to use.

would follow at his own time and not before. A whole fortnight passed before he came up with the rest of the army behind him, and all this time was inevitably wasted, for Joan and d'Alençon had not been strong enough to attack the town without him. Nothing had happened but small and indecisive skirmishes; except a single incident, which is worth recording on account of the importance attached to it by Joan's contemporaries.

[From the day when first she put on her armour and rode to join the army, it had always been the constant desire of the Maid to keep the morals of her soldiers above all reproach, a task which presented no small difficulty when dealing with fifteenth century men-at-arms, but in which her success had always been extraordinary. She forbade women of bad character to follow the army, and from time to time took strong measures to drive them away.] At Saint-Denis, however, she encountered one of this class and, when the girl absolutely refused to go away, Joan drew her sword—the ancient sword of St. Catherine which she had found at Fierbois—and struck at her with the flat. ^{renardaise} The sword broke in her hand, and could never again be mended or made fit for use. The incident made a great impression, and people said freely from

that time forward that her luck had left her, and that the breaking of the mystic sword was the sign that this was so. Her friends could scarcely deny in the light of future events that in any case this opinion seemed to have the support of the facts.

The King arrived at last on September 5, and was warmly welcomed by the soldiery. They were all eager for the battle and full of confidence in Joan's success, though the want of energy shown by the King already caused a little doubt. "There was no one of whatever degree," says a contemporary chronicle, "who did not say that the Maid would lead the King into Paris, if he would only let her."

It was at last decided to attack on September 8, the Nativity of Our Lady, a day which Joan no doubt would have preferred not to choose. But there was no liking for an assault in Charles' mind, and everything was done in a very half-hearted fashion. Joan herself, ever in the forefront when fighting was going on, led the assault on the Porte St. Honoré. The outer works were soon carried and she found herself confronted by the two ditches which formed the next portion of the defences. The first of these was dry and offered hardly any obstacle; the second was more formidable, being deep and

filled with water. She stood alone on its brink, plumbing the depth with her lance, while fully exposed to the fire of the enemy. Her appeal for faggots and other material to fill up the ditch and make an assault on the actual wall possible passed unheeded, but she was quite undaunted and held her ground, calling on the defenders to surrender. [Towards evening a bolt from a crossbow wounded her in the thigh, but in spite of the pain that it caused her she refused to withdraw. "Only get to the walls," she said, "and the place is ours." Then again she cried out, "Oh, if the King would only show himself!" Night fell, and still she refused to go, but continued urging on the men to the attack. "Yield ye," she cried, as she had done at Orleans—"surrender to the King of France." Never, perhaps, was she more wonderful, even in the days of her greatest victories, than she was on this night, absolutely refusing to accept defeat, and holding on hour after hour, undaunted even to the last—waiting for reinforcements that never came, and trusting always with unwavering faith in the King who was all the time betraying her.

At last the enterprise became obviously hopeless in the darkness, and d'Alençon and the other commanders determined to remove Joan

by force, since there seemed no other way. They placed her on her charger and supported her in the saddle, for she could scarcely ride on account of her wound. While they rode home she did nothing but repeat, "O quel dommage!" "What a misfortune!" "If we had held on a little longer," she said, "the inhabitants must have known, and would have come to help us. Par mon martin, the place would have been taken." She could not bring herself to believe that the people of Paris were not at heart loyal to her King, and eager to help him. That was the reason she had held on so long. She had expected every moment a rising within the town. That Frenchmen could be against their King was to her mind as incredible as that the King himself should be a coward and a traitor. Her own loyalty was such that she could not conceive of others as being less loyal, of less passionate devotion, than she was herself.

The next morning she was up early, begging d'Alençon to begin the assault once more. Her heart was cheered by an important addition to her forces, the Baron de Montmorency and sixty men, who had left the Burgundian army to join the King. They were just starting to renew the attack when peremptory orders came from Charles, who was seven miles away at Saint

Denis, absolutely forbidding any further attack to be made. The Maid was in despair, for she saw clearly enough how disastrous it would be to turn back at this juncture, and that to do so would be fatal to any hope of further success. But there was nothing for it but to obey, though it was with a heavy heart that she yielded. Only at a later hour did she learn the full extent of Charles' cowardice. D'Alençon had thrown a bridge of wood across the Seine, and it was by this route that they had intended to advance. But during the night it had been destroyed, not by the English defenders, but by the King's own orders, to make the attack impossible. Charles himself had saved Paris, and made the endeavours of Joan to take the town absolutely useless.

“And thus,” says Percival de Cagny, who rode with Joan to the battle, “was the will of the Maid broken and the army of the King.”

CHAPTER VIII.

The Capture of the Maid.

It was not without difficulty that Joan was persuaded to withdraw from Paris. To everyone else it seemed hopeless to remain. The King was against her, and to continue the attack in face of his opposition would have been nothing less than actual rebellion. But on the other hand her "Voices" now spoke clearly and counselled the continuance of the siege. For three days she held out, passionately advocating further action, and in this she had the support of La Hire and other leaders, who felt that to retire at this juncture was to sacrifice almost all that had been gained. But she was quite unable to gain her desire. The King, guided as always by unworthy favourites, La Trémoille and others, utterly refused his consent. At last her "Voices" gave her permission to go, and weakened by her wound and wearied with her efforts, she was brought to agree. "Had it not been for my wound," she said afterwards, "I would not have gone; but the commanders took me away in spite of myself." It was, and she knew it well, the beginning of the end.

Before her departure, however, she determined on a characteristic action. She offered at Saint-Denis, in honour of Our Lady and of the holy Martyr, the white armour which she had worn ever since she first entered the field before the taking of Orleans. "I did it out of devotion," she told her judges, "for it is the custom of those who are wounded so to do. I had been wounded, and I made my offering to Saint Denis because of the war-cry of France."* To us the act is eloquent of renunciation of shattered hopes: the abdication of the post of leader of the armies of God; the willing acceptance of defeat and humiliation since such was the will of Messire her Saviour. Henceforth her days were to be passed in very different surroundings. The triumphs of the past were over, and with fear and trembling, yet with a brave heart and unbending will, she enters willingly into the cloud, ready to offer herself and to die for France.

To die on the field of battle would have been the death she herself would have desired, especially if, like Nelson or Wolfe, she might have fallen when the victory was already assured. To have gone on fighting with the knowledge that death, even in such a form, was

* "Montjoye Saint Denis."

inevitable within the year, would have been a brave action which would command our admiration, but Joan's action was far greater and nobler than that. For she knew not only that she was to die, and that soon, but also that death would come to her in a form terrible and humiliating. From the time of her retreat from Paris her "Voices" were clear on the point of her death, and after Easter in the following year they told her also that she was to be taken prisoner before midsummer—that it needs must be so—and that she was not to lose courage, for God would help her. To be taken prisoner, she knew well enough, meant that she would be burned alive as a witch. Yet, with that knowledge, and with unfaltering faith in the absolute truthfulness of her "Voices," she never flinched nor drew back, but fought on with the same calm courage as always before. We may give our full adhesion to the words of one of her most sympathetic biographers, who says that she was the bravest woman who ever lived, and that "her end was the most glorious thing in all her glorious life, for many could be brave enough when the Saints prophesied victory, but only she could give her body to be burned for her country."

We need not spend much time over the weary

months which immediately followed the retreat from Paris. It was a time of useless successes, and of long-drawn-out negotiations which were never likely to lead to a lasting peace. All the while Joan's whole soul was crying out for more energetic action, and for a really strong and resolute conduct of the campaign. It was not that she was ill-treated or ignored ; still less, as so many of her historians have written, that she was intentionally thwarted and betrayed. On the contrary, Charles wanted to do her honour, according to his own lights and standard. He loaded her with presents, and raised her to the ranks of the nobility. The pleasure which she took in the beautiful dresses he caused to be made for her was one of the points alleged against her at her trial. There was no actual hostility to Joan, even among his advisers, though, no doubt, jealousy was at work to some extent. It would have been wonderful had it been otherwise. The general feeling was rather that, for the moment, she had no work to do. She had been useful in the past, and she might, no doubt, be useful once again. But Charles was anxious just then to gain his ends by diplomacy, not by the sword, and Joan's perpetual insistence on the necessity for energetic action was

alien to all his thoughts. So she found herself left unsupported, wearing out her very heart in futile longings ; aware that she had but all too short a time wherein to fulfil her mission, and dreading lest by her own fault the work might still be left incomplete when the inevitable end should all too speedily arrive.

Two episodes stand out strongly amid the general dullness. The first was the siege of St. Pierre-le-Moustier, when the wonders of Orleans were again repeated. The attack had been made and was unsuccessful, the bugle blew the retreat, and the troops were recalled. But Joan refused to retire and stood before the walls. "Come back ! Come back !" d'Aulon, her equerry, cried to her from the rear. "Do you not see that you are alone?" She raised the visor of her helmet as she turned to him. "I am not alone," she said ; "I have more than 50,000 of my own with me ; and go back I will not, until this town is taken, and in my hands." "All to the bridge !" she cried in her high pitched voice, "all hands to carry faggots and fascines." And at her cry the men rallied and returned ; the bridge was won, the ladders brought. Nothing could withstand the furious onslaught ; the defenders themselves were paralysed with astonishment, and almost in a

moment the whole affair was over, the breach was made and the town was taken. But it was Joan and Joan alone — her bravery and the influence she had obtained over the troops who followed her—that won St. Pierre-le-Moustier that day for the King of France.

The other incident of this period which seems worth recording rests on the authority of two very old men, who told the story to one of the biographers of the Maid in 1498, nearly seventy years after the event. They were little children at the time, they said, living at Compiègne, and one day, when they were at early Mass in the Church of St. Jacques in that town, the Maid was there too. After Mass they, with a number of the children, had crowded round the place where she was standing, eager to look upon one who had become so famous. She was leaning against a pillar, as if wearied with the service, and, as they stood there gazing at her, she spoke to them out of the fulness of her heart. "Dear friends and children," she said, "I have to tell you that I have been sold and betrayed, and that before long I shall be condemned to death, so I ask you all to pray for me, for I shall soon have no more power to serve the King and the kingdom." The story lacks really authentic foundation, and is not very consis-

tent with all that we know about her from other sources. For though, as she told her judges later on, her "Voices" had before this foretold to her all that was to come upon her, it was not the least heroic of her actions that she kept this knowledge to herself, and went on undismayed and undeterred, doing her duty to the last cheerfully and bravely without allowing herself to be discouraged by the knowledge, the weight of which would have been more than most souls could have supported.

The "Voices" had foretold that she would be a captive in the enemy's hands before midsummer. It was on May 23 that the event then foretold actually took place. By that time the long pretence of negotiations for peace, entered into by the Duke of Burgundy solely for the sake of gaining time, and listened to by Charles against the continual advice of Joan, had come to an end. The Duke was once more openly in the field against the King of France, and was threatening Compiègne. [Joan hurried to the relief of the beleaguered town, which was not actually surrounded, and arrived there early on the morning of May 23. Her presence put fresh courage into the townsmen and a sortie was determined upon, to take place that same day. At five in the evening Joan rode forth

with some five hundred men. They obtained some small success at first, but were soon repulsed and driven back by a much larger force of Burgundians. Remaining herself with the rearguard, Joan retreated in good order, while the Burgundians hurried round to try to cut them off from the city gate. [The possibility of this manœuvre being successfully executed was too much for the nerve of the French townsmen, many of whom, we may suppose, were but little accustomed to war. They broke their ranks and fled panic-stricken.

To the watchers on the walls of Compiègne a new danger now presented itself. They saw the flying men-at-arms and close behind them the pursuing Burgundians. They were terrified at the idea that, if the gates were left open, not only their own men but also the Burgundian soldiery would obtain access into the town. So the order was given to close the gates, leaving the Maid and the rear-guard of their own men outside. There is no need to suggest treachery, for de Fleury, who commanded at Compiègne, was a brave soldier and a loyal gentleman. It may have been an error of judgment, or it may have been the only course open to him, unless he would lose the town as well as the Maid. At this distance of

time, and with our incomplete information, it is not possible for us to judge of the wisdom of his act, however much we may deplore its results.

The Maid, riding back and fighting as she went, found the gates shut against her, and the main line of retreat irrevocably closed.

There was still just one hope of safety. There was another gate to the town on the western side, and towards that she now turned her horse, leaping him off the raised causeway into the marshy meadow. In a moment she was surrounded, pulled off her horse, and made a prisoner. But still she refused to surrender or to acknowledge herself taken. "Yield thee, yield thee," they cried to her; "give us your faith." "No," she answered, "I have given it already to another than you, and I will surely keep my oath."

It may be that she was hoping, since she had now only death to look for, that she might be killed instantly and on the spot, and this may have been the reason of her refusal to surrender. But she was too great a prize to be thus lightly slain. Doubtless the King of France, her captor will have thought, would be willing to pay a great ransom for the Maid, to whom he owed everything. Or if he refused, and to his eternal shame he does not seem to have moved

a finger to help her in her need, there were always the English ready to buy "the white witch" as they called her, that they might burn her alive! No, whether she would surrender or no, she was far too rich a capture to be injured in any way. They seized her and carried her back unhurt to their own camp—their English allies shouting as they went, "Nous l'avons! Nous l'avons!" unable to contain themselves for joy. The Maid was a prisoner in the hands of her mortal enemies!

The Burgundian chroniclers are honest enough to give her the praises due to the gallantry of her last stand and fight for freedom. "There was no one," wrote one of them, "whom the English feared, among the captains and the chiefs in war, as they feared the Maid." ["She had done deeds on that day," says another, "that surpassed the nature of woman;"] remaining behind in the rear, as the chief of all, and the bravest of all. But as fortune befell it was the end of her glory, and the last time that she ever bore arms in battle."

The last part of the statement is true enough. Never again on earth was Joan to bear arms or to join in the clash of battle. But it was not the end of her glory, but rather the beginning. For the true glory of Joan the Maid rests not so

much on her daring in battle, when any man-at-arms can show courage, but rather on the steadfast bravery of her long and cruel imprisonment, and the nobleness of the act whereby she offered herself, with clear foreknowledge of all that was coming upon her, a willing victim for a people who had deserted her, and a country that denied her.

CHAPTER IX.

Joan in Prison.

JOAN was a captive in the hands of her enemies, but her lot would not have seemed to de Fleury and the people of Compiègne so terrible and hopeless as it really was. Surely, they must have said, she will be ransomed and set free, even if she has to pass her word that she will not fight again or lead the armies of France. She was a prisoner of war, entitled to honourable treatment, and one would have thought no ransom that could possibly have been raised by Charles VII would have seemed to him too great to pay for her freedom. No one could have foreseen the hideous fact of which nevertheless, no doubt seems to be possible, that never from first to last was any single attempt, military or diplomatic, made by the King or any of his people to save the Maid from the terrible fate which was already threatening her. All that her captor, John of Luxembourg, desired was money; he would have been quite ready to accept a fitting ransom; but no ransom was offered. Charles and

his Court, we have no choice but to conclude, were rather relieved than otherwise to be rid of her, and were mean and cowardly enough to desert, in the hour of need, the girl to whom they owed everything.

If Joan's friends were thus inactive and indifferent to her fate, her enemies were filled with joy and animated with fierce hatred. Within two days of the capture the University of Paris had already formulated its demand that the prisoner should be handed over to the Church to be tried as a heretic, an idolatress, and a witch. There could be no doubt in anyone's mind as to what was likely to happen to the Maid if she were not ransomed, but still there was no effort to save her. She was carried off to Beaulieu, a castle belonging to John of Luxembourg, and kept there in captivity, while negotiations went on with the English commanders for handing her over to their will. In this castle or at Beaurevoir, another of the strongholds of the same prince, she remained for nearly six months, from the end of May to the middle of November.

At first her whole mind was filled with anxiety for the people of Compiègne, which was now closely surrounded and besieged. She longed to go once more to their relief, and in

spite of the counsel of her "Voices," which "almost daily forbade her," she determined on a desperate attempt at escape. She leaped from the tower, at Beaurevoir, a height of perhaps sixty feet, and by some miracle escaped without breaking a bone. It may be that the so-called "leap" was really an attempt to let herself down, and that the rope, or whatever she was using, failed her, and broke under the weight; for she definitely denied any desire to kill herself, and said that her aim was to escape, though she knew she was risking her life, and that the attempt was desperate. She was for three days almost senseless, after she was taken up, but her youth and abstemious life came to her aid, and before long she was completely recovered. She was filled with remorse for having disobeyed her "Voices"; acknowledged her sin of presumption in thinking that the angels and her saints would bear her up, and not let her be injured; made her confession with great humility, and had the happiness not only of absolution but of the pardon of the "Voices." They assured her that God had pardoned her as well as they, and that Compiègne, her love for which had been the cause of her fall, was about to be relieved. At the same time they told her that she must go

through what lay before her patiently, and that she was to "take no care for the torment that was coming on her, for thence should she come into Paradise."

By the end of October the bargain was agreed to, the price being fixed at 10,000 pounds, an enormous sum for those days, and John of Luxembourg, for money down, sold his captive to the English. She was handed over to their custody, and by them was taken slowly down to Rouen, the capital of the Duchy of Normandy, and therefore the hereditary possession of the Kings of England, who had been Dukes of Normandy long before they obtained the English Crown. She arrived in Rouen about Christmas, 1430.

At Beaurevoir her captivity had not been without its alleviations, nor had she been personally ill-treated. On the contrary, the wife and aunt of John of Luxembourg, both of whom resided in the castle, had been uniformly kind and considerate. They visited her daily, were kind and sweet in every way, and did all they could to make her lot tolerable. On one point, on which Joan had not felt able to do as they desired, they had been very insistent. They had begged her again and again to give up the man's dress which she still wore, and to dress

once more in women's clothes. She answered them courteously enough — she would have yielded the point, she told her judges, to them sooner than to anyone else in France, but “the time had not come.” She seems to have felt that to give up her dress would be the final renunciation of the work she believed herself sent to accomplish. Nor, we may suppose, was there absent from her mind even then, though she would hardly have expressed it to these Burgundian ladies, the thought that her honour was safer among the rough soldiery with whom her life was passed if she was dressed in male clothing like themselves rather than in female attire. She could not grant her friends that point, and they, on their side, did not allow it to prevent them from showing her every kindness that lay in their power.

In her new prison at Rouen things were very different. Here were no ladies to visit her and to speak words of kindness to her. She was kept in a tower of the ancient castle, in a dark cell, fettered and in irons. In the room was an iron cage, made to confine the prisoner in an upright posture, but there is no actual and indisputable evidence that she was ever placed in it. She was watched continually by five common soldiers, three of whom were actually

in the room with her, so that she had no moment's privacy either by day or night. This terrible state of things, the most trying portion, no doubt, to one of her native modesty, of all that she was made to endure, continued unabated for six whole months, and was terminated only by her death.

It was no part of the English plan that Joan should meet with honourable treatment or should be accorded a fair trial. Her fate was irrevocably decided upon as soon as she was in their power. No secret was made of it: it was patent to all the world. The English were bent on explaining away their defeats in battle, and the terror which the Maid had inspired in all their hearts, by referring all to the agency of the Evil One. She was to be burnt alive as a heretic, if the judges could be made to pronounce that sentence; if not, she could still be drowned as a witch, or disposed of in some other way. "It is our intention to repossess ourselves of her, if she be not convicted of her many crimes of High Treason against God," the child-king Henry VI is made to say in the brief for the Trial. On no account would she be allowed to escape, and her condemnation was resolved upon before her trial began.

It was only in accordance with all this that

she was denied the ecclesiastical prison, which was her right as one accused of ecclesiastical offences. There she would have been reasonably treated, and have had women to attend her; but this was not what her enemies desired. So she was kept, quite illegally, in a strict military prison, under conditions utterly unsuitable for even the roughest and most degraded of her sex. No protest availed to change this state of affairs, obviously scandalous though it seemed even to that rough age, when the idea of justice to a fallen foe was not very often found to exist in a conqueror's heart. The Archbishopric of Rouen was vacant. Had it not been so the occupant of that see would, almost necessarily, have judged the cause, and if he had been a strong man and a just one he might have done something to save the Maid. The see being vacant, the Bishop of Beauvais, by name Cauchon, a name which his actions have covered with eternal infamy, was chosen to preside over the judges. With him were others, men of learning and repute—deeply prejudiced, no doubt, against the prisoner, and ready to strain every point of the law against her—but still a tribunal which at the time commanded respect and seemed honest. We cannot absolve them from the shame of their subsequent course of action, but at the

time when they were appointed they were still of good repute and competent lawyers. There is no need to accuse them of being "conscious liars and deliberate murderers"—as a well-known writer has recently done—but, at the same time, they were narrow bigots, strongly biased against the unfortunate girl they had come to try, and all their worldly interests lay in condemning her to the stake. Before such a court, at such a time, the chances of the Maid were small indeed.

Three of these assessors call for a few words of special notice, as being more deeply dyed with infamy than the rest. The first of these is Jean d'Estivet, Cauchon's Vicar-General at Beauvais, a copy of his master with all the bad points heightened. He it was by whose orders Joan, as being under suspicion of heresy, was prevented even from praying as she passed the chapel where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. He, too, was the author of the "accusation" against the Maid, drawn up in seventy articles and full of the most violent and scandalous terms about her.

Thomas de Courcelles, the next who claims our special attention, was a young and learned Doctor of Laws with a reputation for piety. He was, however, thoroughly narrow-minded

and bigoted, and as such was always Cauchon's favourite instrument. How far he was prepared to go in the way of persecution may be gathered from the fact that he, almost alone among her judges, voted that torture should be applied to force the Maid to reveal the secrets she was keeping to herself.

Nicolas Loiseau, a minor canon of Rouen and a doctor of Paris, is the last and the meanest of these three. Nothing was too low or dishonourable for him to undertake. He would post himself to listen to the words of Joan when she was interviewed in her cell—hoping to overhear something that could be used against her—and pretended to be her friend in order to lead her to compromise herself in her speech. He combined this office of *mouton*, or prison spy, with that of judge, and in this latter capacity was one of the three who voted for torture.

When the Court was formally opened the proceedings began by the president calling upon Joan to speak the truth on all questions which might be addressed to her. She replied that she would willingly reply as to her faith and to such questions as she could lawfully answer, but that “of the revelations which have come to me from God to no one will I speak or reveal

them, save only to Charles my King, and to you I will not reveal them even if it cost me my head, because I have received them in visions and by secret counsel, and am forbidden to reveal them." She was therefore permitted to swear to speak truth on all questions relating to her faith, but to keep silence on these other matters. The great point which was before her mind, and on which she had determined to keep silence at all hazards, was, no doubt, "the King's secret," of which she had spoken to Charles VII at Chinon. If modern critics are right in believing this secret to have been connected with Charles' own doubts as to the legitimacy of his birth, it is easy to see how vitally necessary it was for his interests that it should not become known to the English.

The minutes of the trial are still extant, and have been published in full not many years ago. They are long, and tedious to an extraordinary degree, but lit up here and there by answers of wonderful acumen made by the Maid to questions deliberately intended to puzzle and confuse her. The principal points on which she was examined were the fairies and the fairy tree at Domremy—concerning which her answers were always singularly free from any kind of superstition—her "Voices," the King's secret,

and her adoption of male attire. But these points were not kept separate and dealt with one by one, but questions dealing with all, and with many other points, were put to her promiscuously and simultaneously. The object seems to have been in part to confuse her, and to get her to contradict herself, and more than once she had to expostulate, and to ask that questions might be put to her one at a time, in order that she might answer them more completely.

Altogether it is a wonderful picture that is presented to us in the tedious pages of the Process. We see the young girl, utterly unlettered and untaught, standing alone in her black page's dress, without the aid of counsel, before a body of judges who on some days rose in number to fifty or even more. Every effort was made to confuse her, to trap her, and to intimidate her. Yet she is always the same, always courteous, fearless, and simple, answering the most difficult questions in such a way that no evil use could be made of her words, and confounding her judges again and again by the modest readiness with which she foiled every attack and circumvented all their cunning. One may well ask as one reads her replies, written down, it must be remembered, by no friendly

hands, whether it were possible for any girl of her age and circumstances to have answered with such constant wisdom and gentleness, were it not that she was under some guidance more than human. And, indeed, even while she was being examined, her "Voices" spoke to her. She did not quite understand them at the moment, but afterwards, when she had returned to her prison, she understood better. They told her to be of good courage, and to answer without fear.

Every attempt to convict Joan of superstition failed utterly. She was examined as to the appearance of her Saints, but could give no answer that was very definite, except that "their brows were crowned with beautiful crowns, rich and precious." They asked about the sword of St. Catherine de Fierbois, about the Standard and the way in which the names of Jesus and Mary were embroidered on it, and tried, but without success, to turn each to her disadvantage. They could find nothing which could fairly be alleged against her.

On the fifth day of her hearing she uttered a remarkable prophecy, which may be found recorded in the official minutes, and is therefore beyond dispute. "I know," she said, "that before seven years are over the English will have suffered a greater loss than they did at Orleans ;

and they will lose all they hold in France." It was about six years after this prophecy that Charles VII entered Paris, and a year or two later the battle of Formigny fulfilled the rest of the prediction. Not only did the English lose their hold on Paris and the kingdom of France, but even the Duchy of Normandy was wrested from them.

Foiled in the matter of superstition or sorcery, the judges turned to other matters. They tried to entrap her into an untheological statement about her own assurance of salvation, but without success, and again and again they returned to the question of wearing male attire. Other accusations were brought up, which seem to have been entirely false, or at least founded upon misconception, but no crime could be satisfactorily brought home to her. Her judges grew more and more impatient.

Twice during her trial Joan appealed, as was her right, to higher authority than the court which was trying her, and each time her appeal was disallowed. Once she appealed to the General Council of Basle which was then sitting. "Hold your tongue, in the devil's name," cried Cauchon from the Presidential chair, and commanded the notary not to record the appeal. The unfinished sentence which the notary was

writing may still be seen, "*et requiert.*" The words are in the French, but they are omitted from the official Latin version. Cauchon was not going to allow his victim to escape from him in such a way as this, whatever her abstract rights might be.

On the other occasion Joan appealed to the Pope, informally but validly. "Let a report of all I have said and done be sent to our Lord the Pope in Rome," she said. "To him I appeal." "The Pope is too far off," was all the answer that Cauchon gave her. To allow any such appeal, however the law might stand, would not have suited either the Bishop or his English employers. At all hazards Joan must be destroyed, for English arms, it was generally felt, would never prosper while she lived. A contemporary witness put the case clearly enough, if not brutally. "The King of England" (the poor child was but ten years old, and must not be held personally responsible), "would not for anything that she should die a natural death; he had bought her too dear for that, and he intended that she should die at the hands of justice and be burnt." To allow appeal, whether to Basle or Rome, would be quite inconsistent with all that Cauchon and the English commanders had, long before this, determined should be the end of the trial.

CHAPTER X.

The Martyrdom of the Maid.

CAUCHON was anxious that the sentence of his Court should have all the support that could be obtained. He sent it, therefore, to the University of Paris for examination and approval. In so doing he ran no great risk, for Paris was entirely given over to the English interest, and all the doctors of the University who were of the other party had long since been expelled.

On May 23 their answer had arrived. The University commended the “elegant” style in which the case had been presented to them, and entirely adhered to the finding of Cauchon’s court. The “Voices” were declared to be nothing but evil spirits—Belial, Satan, and Behemoth, masquerading as saints of God. Her use of a man’s dress was declared to be “blasphemous and contemptuous of God and His Sacraments.” No term of abuse is too strong to be used against her ; she is traitorous and a blasphemer ; cruel and infamous ; an apostate, an idolater, an invoker of demons. They had not seen the accused, nor heard her

defence, but they did not hesitate to pronounce sentence and to reiterate her condemnation. Nothing remained but to carry out the judgment which had been arrived at with such disregard for justice and chivalry.

It was on May 24, Thursday in the octave of Pentecost, that the last scene but one was to take place, and the sentence to be formally pronounced. In the churchyard behind the great Church of St. Ouen two platforms had been erected. On the one sat the great ecclesiastics of the English party, Cardinal Beaufort, the uncle of the king, the Bishops of Beauvais and of Norwich, and the Vice-Inquisitor, whose presence was necessary to legalise the proceedings. On the other was Joan herself, in her usual black page's dress and close-cropped hair, a great crowd of lesser ecclesiastics, and a pulpit, from which one Erard, a well-known preacher, was to address the condemned girl, and if possible to move her to penitence. All below, everywhere where standing room could be obtained, surged a great crowd of people.

The preacher took his text from St. John, "A branch cannot bear fruit except it remain in the Vine." He did not spare his words or soften them through any tenderness for the weakness of the unfortunate girl he was addressing. No

phrase was too violent, no name too harsh, to be poured out upon her. For a long hour he continued, and all the while Joan answered nothing. Then he turned from her to abuse her prince, "Charles, who calls himself King of France." "To thee, Joan, I speak, and I tell thee that the King is a schismatic and a heretic." Then, at last, the girl's voice rose in answer, to defend the man for whom she had done everything and who had only left her to die in return. "By my faith, sire," she burst out indignantly, "saving your respect, I swear upon my life, that my King is the most noble Christian of Christians ; he is not what you say."

The preacher went on again, and, addressing Joan once more, told her to submit to her judges. "I have told your Doctors," she replied again, "that all my deeds and words should be sent to Rome to our Holy Father, to whom, after God, I appeal. As for my deeds, I burden no man with them, neither my King nor any other. If fault there be, the fault is mine and mine alone." Then the Bishop began to read the admonition, but by this time the excitement of the crowd had become intense, and, although we have the evidence of eye-witnesses, it is difficult to find out exactly what happened. The shouts of the people drowned the voice of the preacher and of

the Bishop, and it was no doubt almost impossible for any one to know all that was going on.

We can scarcely wonder that even Joan's fortitude began to desert her amid such surroundings. There she stood, alone and deserted, with no one to help or even to pity her, with a hostile mob howling for her blood, and the stake, prepared with heaped up faggots, immediately before her eyes. Erard held a document before her. "Sign it," he cried, "and sign it at once, or else burn at once." She desired that it might be read to her, that she might know what it contained, and what she was signing. They read it and made her repeat it word for word—a very short document of but few lines. How it was worded we do not know; it has not been handed down to us, and in its place among the documents of the trial appears a long recantation, couched in most insulting terms, and utterly denying her whole mission and the authenticity of her "Voices." That was what they gave out that she had signed; but it seems most probable that she never so much as saw it. What she thought she was signing—the document to which she affixed her mark, a circle and a cross—was apparently not much more than an acknowledgment of error, followed by an act of formal submission to the Church, and to her judges as

representing the Church. One who stood by and saw the document itself has borne his testimony about it : it was written, he tells us, in large letters, and occupied about six lines. It was no longer, says another witness, than the Lord's Prayer. Short as it was, it sufficed for the moment to save her life, a conclusion most distasteful to the crowd of hostile spectators who had come to see her die. She was led back to her prison, absolved from her heresy, and admitted to penitence, but by no means a free woman. As a penitent she was condemned to a lifelong imprisonment, to eat the bread of affliction in solitude, and to ponder, so long as God let her live, on the sins of the life that was past.

Once more in prison, Joan was able to take a truer view of what she had done, now that the stake was no longer before her eyes and the terror of death upon her. "God told me, through St. Catherine and St. Margaret," she said to her judges a day or two later, "of the great pity of the treason to which I consented, when I made that abjuration and revoking to save my life, and that I had condemned myself to save my life. . . . If I were to say that God had not sent me, I should condemn myself, for it is the truth that God did send me. . . . What

I said, I said in fear of the fire." What she had signed, it is quite clear, must have implied some want of faith and steadfastness ; at the least a momentary weakening in the carrying out of the mission which had been given her.

"What I said, I said in fear of the fire." Yes, and there was another motive which had been almost equally powerful in her mind. If she submitted to the Church, surely they could no longer deny her the privilege, which had by right been hers all through the period of her captivity, of being the Church's prisoner, and not a mere military captive. She would now go to the custody of ecclesiastics ; now have women to guard her and see to her wants ; now be freed from the hateful and insulting company of the five English men-at-arms who for five months had never left her. "People of the Church," she cried out in her eagerness, "take me to your prison, take me out of the hands of the English." It was her right, but right and justice had little weight with Cauchon or with her English enemies. "Take her back," said the Bishop, "to the place where she was before." After all her weakness had won her nothing. She must go back to the place of infamy, utterly unprotected among the rough men who hated her, and she must resign even the one poor

safeguard to which she had hitherto clung—her man's dress. That, there can be no doubt, was the point on which Cauchon was relying when he sent her back. "We will have her again before many days," he said to Warwick. He knew well enough how life could be made more hateful than any death to one who still retained unimpaired her virtue and her virgin modesty.

We cannot bear to think of what went on in that terrible prison during the days that followed. There are some things which cannot be written down, or even thought. All that we do really know is that on Sunday, May 28, three days after her abjuration, Cauchon was rubbing his hands with glee, for the news had come that Joan had put off her woman's dress and was wearing once again the page's suit. She had "relapsed" into her old offences, and nothing now could possibly save her from his hands.

There are two stories as to the way in which this result, so desirable in the eyes of Cauchon and the English soldiers, had been brought about. The first is that her English gaolers took away from her, when she was in bed, her woman's dress, and left her only the other to put on. The struggle, according to this account, went on for many hours; not till the afternoon did she at last give way and yield to the

necessities of the case. The act which was to be her undoing was then involuntary on her part. A trap was set for her, and she was given no choice but to walk into it.

Against this story there are two points which seem decisive. In the first place, we know that it was ever Joan's custom, when she was obliged to be amongst men, and could have no woman to share her room, to sleep fully dressed, removing no part of her attire. She is not likely to have varied from this rule when she was in real danger and in the hands of her enemies. In the second place, it seems quite inconsistent with her own words. "I took it of my own free will, and with no constraint," she told her judges on the following day. "I did it because it is more lawful and suitable for me to resume it and wear man's dress, being with men, than to have a woman's dress." This answer seems to point to the truth of the statement which was made by one of the Dominican Fathers, that he had heard Joan say to her judges publicly "that the English had done or caused to be done to her great wrong and violence when she was wearing a woman's dress." Cauchon's scheme, we can hardly doubt, had succeeded only too well. She had to choose between death and dishonour, and she

chose death. It is the most shameful episode of a trial every detail of which was full of shame.

The news that Joan had again resumed man's clothes was not long in spreading. It was only Monday morning that the Bishop of Beauvais, with several companions, arrived at the prison doors, eager to see for himself that the report was true. He was at once admitted to the cell, and there, sure enough, stood Joan in tunic and hose, having resumed the dress which had been so stringently forbidden her, but which at the same time had been so carefully left within her reach.

They asked her why it was that she had thus acted. She answered that it was of her own free will, and that it was more suitable being among men. They told her that she had sworn not to resume it, but she denied that she had ever meant to do so. Still she had no desire to wear it, were it not that they themselves had made it necessary. If only she might be taken out of irons and be allowed to go to Mass and be put in a more gracious prison where she could have a woman as a companion, then she would not wear it. She would be good, and do as the Church bade her.

Then they asked her again about her "Voices."

They had heard rumours that since the day of her abjuration she had heard them again. Was that so?

Yes. She had heard them again. They had told her that she had done great evil in declaring that her previous acts had been wrong.

Whom did she believe to have spoken to her and told her this? Her "Voices" were St. Catherine and St. Margaret; she had never meant to deny that; what she had said was from fear of the fire. She had never done anything against God or the Faith, whatever she may have been made to say in the revocation. She had not understood what she was being made to say, nor had meant to revoke anything except according to the Will of God. She ended by offering to put on her woman's dress once more if the judges so desired, but for the rest she could do nothing.

Cauchon left the prison full of a hideous joy. Joan was now irrevocably in his power: she had withdrawn her recantation before witnesses, and nothing could now save her. As he returned to his house he met the Earl of Warwick and a great many English with him. He saluted them gaily. "Farewell, farewell," he called out to him, "the thing is done. Be of good cheer." The next day he gathered together all her judges

in the chapel of the Archbishop of Rouen, and put the case solemnly before them. Since her recantation he told them that she had, "driven by the Devil, in the presence of many persons, declared anew that her 'Voices' and the spirits that appeared to her have returned to her and have said many things to her, and casting away her woman's dress she hath again taken male garments." What did they think?

They all agreed (there was indeed nothing else for them to do if the validity of the previous findings be admitted) that there was no need of further witnesses, her own words had sufficiently condemned her, and that she must be treated as a heretic that had relapsed. Let her be handed over to the secular authorities, which should be prayed to deal gently with her. It was the usual formula for sending a victim to the stake, and the judges were unanimous in their verdict. The fate of Joan was sealed finally, and her doom was fixed to take place on the following day.

All that day, Tuesday, May 29, Joan was left in ignorance of what had been decided, though she must have known that she had sealed her fate by her words on the previous day. It was not till the next morning, May 30, an hour or two before the sentence was carried out, that Joan knew how and when she was to die.

The announcement was made to her by two Dominican Fathers, Ladvenu and Toutmouillé. They told her the terrible news as gently as they could, for the Dominicans had never been her enemies, though they might no doubt have made a more valiant stand on her behalf than they actually did. She burst into tears, crying out and tearing her hair. "Alas!" she said, "am I to be thus horribly and cruelly treated. Will they burn my body which has never been corrupted, and reduce it whole and entire to ashes this day. Ah, ah, far rather would I be beheaded seven times over than be thus burned. Ah! had I been in the prisons of the Church, the Church to whom I submitted; had I been guarded by churchfolk, and not by my enemies, all this evil would not have befallen me. I appeal to God, the great Judge of all, against all these wrongs which they do to me." Then she turned to Cauchon, who just then entered the cell: "Bishop," she said, "this is your doing. If you had put me into the prison of the Church Courts, and given me suitable and ecclesiastical warders, all this would never have happened—wherefore I summon you before the judgment seat of God."

Perhaps it was the effect of these impassioned words which melted his heart, but Cauchon now

yielded a point to the prayers of the Maid. He gave her leave to confess and to receive the Most Holy Sacrament before she died. The act seems to show that he did not himself believe in the justice of his own judgment. If she were indeed a relapsed and unrepentant heretic, how was it possible to grant her this boon? The permission, while it shows that there were lengths to which his hardness of heart and personal hostility to Joan could not force him, yet can hardly be construed in any sense favourable to his justice and sincerity.

The Blessed Sacrament was brought—by a priest from a neighbouring church. Fearing the brutality of the English soldiers and possible outrage to himself and to his burden, he brought it secretly and without the sacred vestments. But Ladvenu, who was acting as the Maid's confessor, refused to allow this to be so, and sent the priest back to the church, ordering him to come with the accustomed ceremonies. This time the priests rose superior to their fears; a little procession was formed with lights and all else that was needful, and the Blessed Sacrament was brought again, the priests and others who followed bearing candles in their hands, and chanting as they went the Litany of the Saints, with the constant response, "Pray for her,"

repeated again and again. Holy Communion was administered by Ladvenu, and Joan still in irons and in male attire, received, as he has told us, with singular devotion and with many tears.

After her Communion she was dressed once more in woman's clothes. It was eight o'clock, and the executioners were already waiting. She was calm and self-possessed now—the momentary terror and distress had soon passed away. They dressed her in a long robe reaching to her feet. Her head was covered with a mitre of scorn, the customary head dress of one thus condemned. It bore the words,

HERETIC, RELAPSED, APOSTATE, IDOLATER.

She passed down the stairs, leaving her prison for the last time, and took her place in the car in which she was to be driven to the place of execution, the Market Place of Rouen. Ladvenu, her confessor, was still by her side, and another Dominican, Frère Isambard, was also with her. It is from their testimony that we know almost all the details of the scene that have come down to us.

The streets were overflowing with spectators, as indeed was only natural, and progress could not but be slow. Eight hundred English soldiers kept the way, and followed in the rear as the car rumbled over the rough stones. As the

terrible procession passed along, the demeanour of the Maid touched all hearts. "She was filled with such great contrition and repentance that it was wonderful to see her, and as she went she gave utterance to words so devout, pathetic and Catholic, that all the great multitude who beheld her wept bitterly."

The Via Dolorosa ended at last, and they came to the Old Market Place.

There, plain to be seen, were three great erections prepared, a platform for the magnates, and another for Joan herself, just as there had been at St. Ouen, so that she might be exhibited and preached at for the last time ; and a third, a great mass of plaster, supporting the faggots and the stake.

Nicolas Midi preached the sermon : "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." Joan was a rotten branch, to be cast out of the Church, that others might not suffer by contamination with her sin. The sermon was one long torrent of invective. At the end the Bishop himself rose in his place and read the sentence, with its reiteration of insult and accusation.

Joan, it is to be hoped, heard little of all this. Her one thought now was to make her peace with God since die she must, and that so terribly. She knelt down upon the platform and cried

aloud "upon the Blessed Trinity, and the Blessed and Glorious Virgin Mary, and all the Blessed Saints in Paradise—naming some of them"—her own special Saints, no doubt—"specially by their names." She made her acts of faith and of contrition, and then, turning herself to the crowd, "she besought mercy, most humbly, of all persons whatsoever condition or estate, asking them all to pray for her, and forgiving them the harm they had done her." In this way she continued "as long a space of time as half an hour," while all the people who stood around could not but be filled with pity as they looked upon the poor child, scarcely yet nineteen years of age, so soon to come to the torture. Almost all who saw her wept, even the Cardinal of England and the judges who had condemned her.

Only the English captains were still eager for her death, and afraid that so much sympathy might end in her rescue. "Come, Sir Priest," one of them cried out to Massieu, who was trying to console her, "will you keep us here all day? Must we dine here?"

The Church had done its part and had handed her over to the secular arm, to be duly punished for her offences. She was taken now from the platform on which she had stood during the preach-

ing, to the other, where was seated among other great ones the Bailiff of Rouen. It was his place to pronounce the final sentence and to give her over to the executioner. Such was the confusion and the excitement that prevailed, that this sentence was never passed. "I saw and clearly perceived," says Friar Isambard, "because I was there all through the time, that the secular judge never condemned her either to death or burning. . . . She was delivered, without any judgment or sentence of that judge, into the hands of the executioner. Nothing was said to the executioner, except this only, 'Do thy duty.'" They led her to the stake, and began to make her ascend. On the top there was a title fixed setting forth her alleged crimes :

JOAN, CALLED THE MAID, LIAR, DECEIVER
OF THE PEOPLE, SOOTHSAYER, BLASPHEMER OF
GOD, PERNICIOUS, SUPERSTITIOUS, IDOLATROUS,
CRUEL, DISSOLUTE, INVOKER OF DEVILS,
APOSTATE, SCHISMATIC, HERETIC.

She fell once more on her knees and asked for a cross. A priest ran to the church of St. Saviour, close by, and obtained the cross of the church. He brought it to her, as she stood ready to be fastened to the stake, and she embraced it long and lovingly. An Englishman, too, who

stood by and heard her request, had already made her a rough cross of two pieces of broken wood. She took it, pressed it to her lips, and then placed it within her dress, close to her heart.

Now she was fastened to the stake, high up on the mound of plaster in the full view of all. The fire was lighted beneath her and the flames began to ascend. The two Dominican friars stood close beside her on the faggots, holding the cross before her eyes, until she begged them to descend, fearing lest the flames should catch them also. The flames shot up higher and higher, the black clouds of smoke enveloped the white figure in their midst; and ever from among the clouds came the constant reiterated cry: Jesus! Jesus!

Then as the crowd surged around, kept back with difficulty by the soldiers from pressing in too closely upon the fire, there rose a great cry from the flames so loud and joyful that all could hear it. "My Voices, My Voices," she cried, "they have not deceived me." She saw it then and understood. In the ignominy of her death, her mission was proved and consecrated. Once more, as always with His Saints, out of weakness God had brought forth strength.

“So in the midst of the flames she never once

ceased confessing in a loud voice the holy name of Jesus, continually imploring and invoking the help of the saints in Paradise ; and, finally, as she breathed her last and bowed her head, she uttered the name of JESUS in so loud a voice that this her last cry was heard at the further end of the Market Place."

So died the Maid of France, with the Holy Name of Jesus upon her lips.

Slowly and sadly the crowd melted away ; some filled still with a fierce joy that the girl who had conquered them so often in battle no longer lived to repeat the victories ; but most impressed with the terrible scene they had witnessed, and anxious about the future, for they could no longer doubt as to the character of their victim. "Woe is me," more than one was saying to his neighbour, "we have burned a Saint."

The hatred of her enemies pursued her even after death. That no honour might be done to her sacred relics, and perhaps in superstitious fear lest such relics might lead in French hands to a renewal of the wonders that had marked her life, her ashes, including her heart, which had remained wholly unconsumed, were thrown into the Seine.

That is the reason why the Church possesses no relic of Joan the Maid.

When the Church fully realised the shameful crime which had been committed in her name and by the hands of one of her ministers, she hastened to disavow his acts, and to clear the memory of his victim. In 1456, by order of Pope Pius II, the whole condemnation of Joan was utterly annulled, and she herself declared innocent of all the crimes of which she had been accused.

Four centuries and a half have passed away since then, and now the Church has taken a further step. The Divine approval of this Servant of God has been shown by miracles wrought through her intercession, and the Vicar of Christ has declared her virtues heroic. The victim of the Market Place of Rouen takes her place among the Blessed whose help is invoked by the faithful. At her solemn Beatification on April 18, 1909, France and England, unnaturally allied against her in 1431, vied with one another to do her honour. May her prayers now be heard alike for the France which she loved, and for the England which she found so cruel an enemy, that both may come back to the Faith from which they have wandered, but which to her was dearer than all, even than life itself.

BEATA JOANNA ORA PRO NOBIS.

APPENDIX.

THE ENGLISH BISHOPS AND THE BEATIFICATION OF JOAN OF ARC.

On Tuesday, at a reception in Rome to the French clergy, the Bishop of Middlesbrough and the Bishop of Menevia, on behalf of the English Bishops, presented the following address to the French Hierarchy :—

TO THEIR VENERABLE BRETHREN, THE BISHOPS
OF FRANCE, THE BISHOPS OF ENGLAND
SEND GREETING.

The brotherly affection which urged us to write to you in the day of your distress, impels us now to send you a message of congratulation, that we may share none the less in your joy than we have shared with you in your sorrow. One more bright ornament has been added to your Church and country, and that which all true and generous hearts had long wished to see has come to pass. After mature deliberation, the Apostolic See has delivered judgment on Joan, the Maid of Orleans, and that, not merely by vindicating her memory, as it did of old, but

by decreeing her the honours which are paid to the Blessed in heaven. It is recognised at length by this supreme verdict, a verdict which must command the serious attention of all, how great was that pure Maiden's trust in God, how strong her love of Fatherland, how deservedly she is held up to the admiration of every age for her tenacity of purpose, more than man's, and a courageous endurance far in advance of her years. Time, which is wont to blot out the remembrance of kindly deeds, has enthroned her in the hearts of distant generations. Truth, albeit tardy, avenges the assaults of calumny; and yet, so ample is the vengeance taken, we need not grudge truth's delay. For she that once was forsaken by well nigh all, is now encompassed with the affection of the whole Catholic world; her unending triumph wipes out the dishonour once done her; a crown more sacred than any which earth can bestow makes atonement for the iniquity of her death. Old enmities are forgotten; we see her acclaimed by the descendants of those who fought against her as their foe; amongst our own countrymen hardly any are there nowadays to be found who, far from grudging the holy Maid her honours, do not even wish to see those honours increased. As for us who, more than any, had the fulfilment

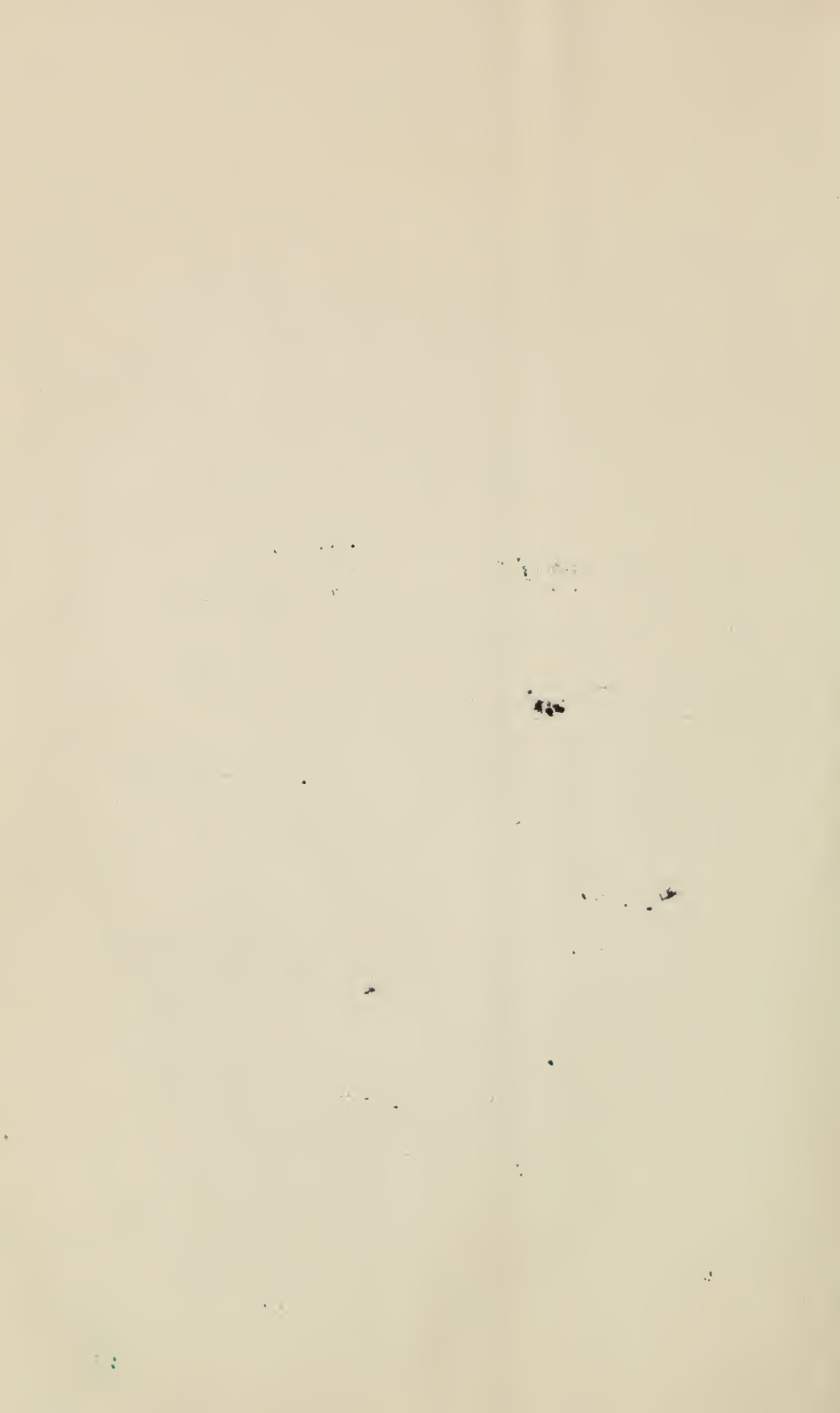
of this great act of justice at heart, whilst we rejoice with you at beholding the Church of France adorned with this fair new floweret, we claim at the same time the powerful intercession of her who now becomes our Patroness and our Guide. May she once again come to the aid of France, of yourselves and of your flocks ! May she establish peace between your nation and ours ! Through her may Christ, the one true King, be crowned in the hearts of men ; that united in the profession of the one Faith, in the one Fold, and under one Shepherd, we may all together praise that Wisdom which controls the course of all things here below, avenging its followers in the end ; which “ forsook not the Just when she was sold, but delivered her from sinners, and went down with her into the pit, and in bands left her not, until it brought her the sceptre of a kingdom, and power against those that oppressed her, and showed them to be liars that had accused her.” Farewell !

Given at Westminster, this 8th day of April,
1909.

Signed on behalf of the Bishops of England
and Wales,

✠ FRANCIS,

Archbishop of Westminster.



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